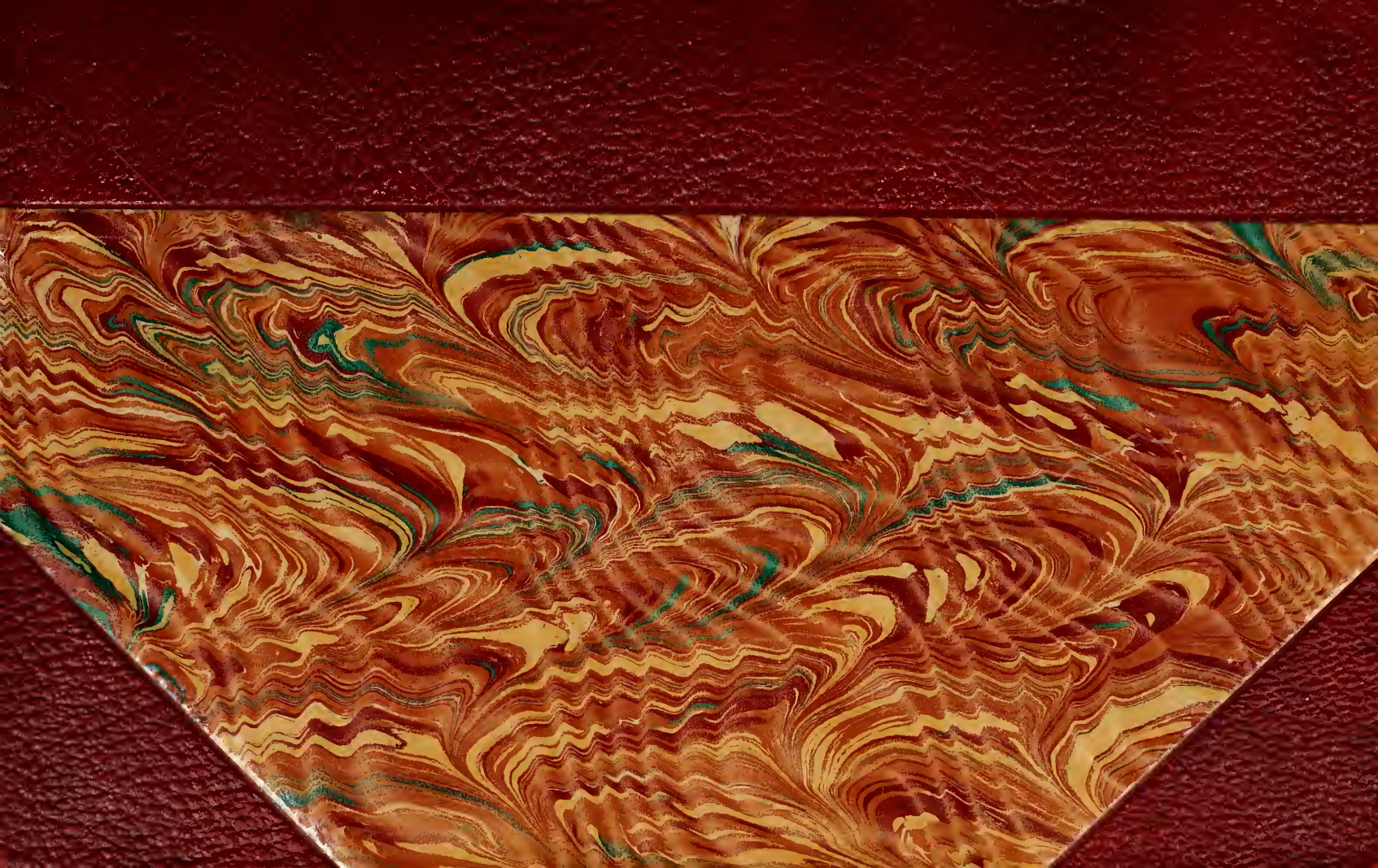

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THE LIFE AND WORKS OF CHARLES LAMB

CHARLES LAMB

Edition de Luxe

THE WORKS

OF

CHARLES LAMB

Illustrated

CHARLES LAMB

By ALFRED AINGER

ADVENTURES OF ULYSSES, GUY FAUX, ETC.

WITH NOTES BY ALFRED AINGER

The Chesterfield Society

London New York

EDITION DE LUXE

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PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1888

THIS Memoir was originally published in the "Men of Letters Series," edited by Mr. John Morley. In revising it for the present Edition, I have not materially altered its form and scale, but in the six years that have elapsed since its first appearance new facts have come to light, especially affecting the earlier and more obscure years of Charles Lamb's life. The archives of the Inner Temple, the Burial Registers of various churches, the Will of Samuel Salt, the more careful arrangement of Lamb's Letters, besides information from private sources, have enabled me to make additions to the second and third chapters of this book, whereby the early career of Lamb is now told more fully and accurately than before. Some footnotes have also been added. References in the book to Lamb's Letters are to my Edition of his Correspondence.

A. A.

TULLIBELTON, PERTH
September 1888

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V. Charles and Mary Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains. *By W. Carew Hazlitt* 1874

VI. Life of Coleridge. [Vol. i.] *By James Gillman* 1838

VII. Early Recollections of Coleridge. *By Joseph Cottle* 1837

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X. Autobiography of Leigh Hunt 1850

XI. Memoirs of William Hazlitt. *By W. Carew Hazlitt* 1867

XII. Literary Reminiscences. *By Thomas Hood* (in *Hood's Own*) 1839

XIII. Haydon's Autobiography and Journals 1853

XIV. Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson 1869

XV. Memoirs of Charles Mathews (the Elder). *By Mrs. Mathews* 1838

XVI. Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey 1849

XVII. Obituary Notices, Reminiscences, Essays, Etc.
In various Magazines and Reviews.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

1775—1789

PAGE

BOYHOOD—THE TEMPLE AND CHRIST'S HOSPITAL 3

CHAPTER II

1789—1797

FAMILY STRUGGLES AND SORROWS 25

CHAPTER III

1797—1800

FIRST EXPERIMENTS IN LITERATURE 49

CHAPTER IV

1800—1809

DRAMATIC AUTHORSHIP AND DRAMATIC CRITICISM 73

CHAPTER V

1809—1817

INNER TEMPLE LANE—PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS 105

CHAPTER VI

1817—1823

RUSSELL STREET, COVENT GARDEN—THE ESSAYS OF ELIA 135

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER VII

1823—1826

COLEBROOK ROW, ISLINGTON—THE CONTROVERSY WITH SOUTHEY, AND RETIREMENT FROM THE INDIA HOUSE 173

CHAPTER VIII

1826—1834

ENFIELD AND EDMONTON 205

CHAPTER IX

LAMB'S PLACE AS A CRITIC 235

THE ADVENTURES OF ULYSSES 255

GUY FAUX 381

ON THE AMBIGUITIES ARISING FROM PROPER NAMES 395

ON THE CUSTOM OF HISSING AT THE THEATRES 397

THE GOOD CLERK, A CHARACTER 407

NOTES 419

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF CHARLES LAMB *Photogravure*	FRONTISPIECE
	FRONTING PAGE
THE NEW HALL, CHRIST'S HOSPITAL *From an old print*	30
LAMB IMITATING A PHRENOLOGIST *From drawing by* K. SHIRLEY GRANT	121
EAST INDIA HOUSE, LEADENHALL ST. *From an old print*	174
PERPETUATING THE MEMORY OF THIS DELIVERANCE	388

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD—THE TEMPLE AND CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

1775—1789

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD—THE TEMPLE AND CHRIST'S HOSPITAL 1775—1789

"I WAS born and passed the first seven years of my life in the Temple. Its church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said—for in those young years what was this king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places? —these are of my oldest recollections." In this manner does Charles Lamb, in an essay that is one of the masterpieces of English prose, open for us those passages of autobiography which happily abound in his writings. The words do more than fix places and dates. They strike the key in which his early life was set—and the later life, hardly less. The genius of Lamb was surely guided into its special channel by the chance that the first fourteen years of his life were passed, as has been said, "between cloister and cloister," between the mediæval atmosphere of the quiet Temple and that of the busy school of Edward VI.

Charles Lamb was born on the 10th of February 1775 in Crown Office Row[1] in the Temple, the line

[1] It was at No. 2 in this Row, the back windows of which then looked into Inner Temple Lane, that Samuel Salt, the future Bencher of the Inn, occupied the ground floor. In the Records of

of buildings facing the garden and the river he has so lovingly commemorated. His father, John Lamb, who had come up a country boy from Lincolnshire to seek his fortune in the great city, was clerk and servant to Mr. Samuel Salt, a Bencher of the Inner Temple. He had married Elizabeth Field, whose mother was for more than fifty years housekeeper at the old mansion of the Plumers, Blakesware, in Hertfordshire, the Blakesmoor of the *Essays of Elia*. The issue of this marriage was a family of seven children, only three of whom seem to have survived their early childhood. The registers of the Temple Church record the baptisms of all the seven children, ranging from the year 1762 to 1775. Of the three who lived, Charles was the youngest. The other two were his brother John, who was twelve years, and his sister Mary Anne (better known to us as Mary), who was ten years his senior. The marked difference in age between Charles and his brother and sister must never be overlooked in estimating the difficulties and the heroism of his later life.

In the essay already cited—that on the *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*—Charles has drawn for us a touching portrait of his father, the barrister's clerk, under the name of Lovel. After speaking

the Inner Temple there is an entry of Salt having been admitted at a parliament held on 13th May 1768, "to the benefit of an Assignment in and to all that Ground Chamber, No. 2, opposite the Garden Walk, in Crown Office Row."

of Samuel Salt, the Bencher, and certain indolent and careless ways from which he "might have suffered severely if he had not had honest people about him," he digresses characteristically into a description of the faithful servant who was at hand to protect him:—

"Lovel took care of everything. He was at once his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his 'flapper,' his guide, stop-watch, auditor, treasurer. He did nothing without consulting Lovel, or failed in anything without expecting and fearing his admonishing. He put himself almost too much in his hands, had they not been the purest in the world. He resigned his title almost to respect as a master, if Lovel could ever have forgotten for a moment that he was a servant.

"I knew this Lovel. He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and 'would strike.' In the cause of the oppressed he never considered inequalities, or calculated the number of his opponents. He once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him, and pommelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female—an occasion upon which no odds against him could have prevented the interference of Lovel. He would stand next day bare-headed to the same person, modestly to excuse his interference, for Lovel never forgot rank, where something better was not concerned. Lovel was the liveliest little fellow

breathing; had a face as gay as Garrick's, whom he was said greatly to resemble (I have a portrait of him which confirms it); possessed a fine turn for humorous poetry—next to Swift and Prior; moulded heads in clay or plaster of Paris to admiration, by the dint of natural genius merely; turned cribbage-boards, and such small cabinet toys, to perfection; took a hand at quadrille or bowls with equal facility; made punch better than any man of his degree in England; had the merriest quips and conceits, and was altogether as brimful of rogueries and inventions as you could desire. He was a brother of the angle, moreover, and just such a free, hearty, honest companion as Mr. Izaak Walton would have chosen to go a-fishing with.

"I saw him in his old age, and the decay of his faculties, palsy-smitten, in the last sad stage of human weakness—'a remnant most forlorn of what he was'—yet even then his eye would light up upon the mention of his favourite Garrick. He was greatest, he would say, in Bayes—'was upon the stage nearly throughout the whole performance, and as busy as a bee.' At intervals, too, he would speak of his former life, and how he came up a little boy from Lincoln to go to service, and how his mother cried at parting with him, and how he returned after some few years' absence in his smart new livery, to see her, and she blessed herself at the change and could hardly be brought to believe that it was 'her own bairn.' And then, the excitement subsiding, he

would weep, till I have wished that sad second-childhood might have a mother still to lay its head upon her lap. But the common mother of us all in no long time after received him gently into hers."

I have digressed, in my turn, from the story of Charles Lamb's own life, but it is not without interest to learn from whom Charles inherited, not only something of his versatility of gift, but his chivalry and tenderness.

The household in Crown Office Row were from the beginning poor—of that we may feel certain. An aunt of Charles, his father's sister, formed one of the family, and contributed something to the common income, but John Lamb the elder was the only other bread-winner. And a barrister's clerk with seven children born to him in a dozen years, even if lodging were found him, could not have had much either to save or to spend. Before seven years of age Charles got the rudiments of education from a Mr. William Bird, whose schoolroom looked "into a discoloured dingy garden in the passage leading from Fetter Lane into Bartlett's Buildings." We owe this, and some other curious information about the academy, to a letter of Lamb's addressed in 1826 to Hone, the editor of the *Every-Day Book*. In that periodical had appeared an account of a certain Captain Starkey, who was for some time an assistant of Bird's. The mention of his old teacher's name in this connection called up in Lamb many recollections of his earliest school-days, and produced the

letter just named, full of characteristic matter. The school, out of Fetter Lane, was a day-school for boys, and an evening school for girls, and Charles and Mary had the advantages, whatever they may have been, of its instruction. Starkey had spoken of Bird as "an eminent writer, and teacher of languages and mathematics," etc.; upon which Lamb's comment is, "Heaven knows what languages were taught in it then! I am sure that neither my sister nor myself brought any out of it but a little of our native English." Then follow some graphic descriptions of the birch and the ferule, as wielded by Mr. Bird, and other incidents of school-life:—

"Oh, how I remember our legs wedged into those uncomfortable sloping desks, where we sat elbowing each other; and the injunctions to attain a free hand, unattainable in that position; the first copy I wrote after, with its moral lesson, 'Art improves nature'; the still earlier pot-hooks and the hangers, some traces of which I fear may yet be apparent in this manuscript."

When Charles had absorbed such elementary learning as was to be acquired under Mr. Bird and his assistants, his father might have been much perplexed where to find an education for his younger son, within his slender means, and yet satisfying his natural ambition, had not a governor of Christ's Hospital, of the name of Yeates, probably a friend of Samuel Salt, offered him a presentation to that admirable charity. And on the 9th of October 1782,

Charles Lamb, then in his eighth year, entered the institution, and remained there for the next seven years.

There is scarcely any portion of his life about which Lamb has not himself taken his readers into his confidence, and in his essay on *Witches and other Night-fears* he has referred to his own sensitive and superstitious childhood, made more sensitive by the books, meat too strong for childish digestion, to which he had free access in his father's collection. "I was dreadfully alive to nervous terrors. The night-time solitude and the dark were my hell. The sufferings I endured in this nature would justify the expression. I never laid my head on my pillow, I suppose, from the fourth to the seventh or eighth year of my life—so far as memory serves in things so long ago—without an assurance, which realised its own prophecy, of seeing some frightful spectre." Lamb was fond both of exaggeration and of mystification, as we shall see farther on, but this account of his childhood is not inconsistent with descriptions of it from other sources. There was a strain of mental excitability in all the family, and in the case of Charles the nervousness of childhood was increased by the impediment in his speech which remained with him for life, and made so curious a part of his unique personality. "He was an amiable, gentle boy," wrote one who had been at school with him, "very sensible and keenly observing, indulged by his school-fellows and by his master on account of

his infirmity of speech. I never heard his name mentioned," adds this same school-fellow, Charles Valentine Le Grice, "without the addition of Charles, although, as there was no other boy of the name of Lamb, the addition was unnecessary; but there was an implied kindness in it, and it was a proof that his gentle manners excited that kindness." Let us note here that this term "gentle" (the special epithet of Shakspeare) seems to have occurred naturally to all Lamb's friends as that which best described him. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, and Cary recall no trait more tenderly than this. And let us note also that the addition of his Christian name (Lamb loved the use of it: "So Christians," he said, "should call one another") followed him through life and beyond it. There is perhaps no other English writer who is so seldom mentioned by his surname alone.

Of Lamb's experience of school-life we are fortunate in having a full description in his essay, entitled *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, published in 1818, and the sequel to it, called *Christ's Hospital five-and-thirty years ago* (one of the *Elia* essays), published two years later. But it requires some familiarity with Lamb's love of masquerading, already referred to, to disengage fact from fancy, and extract what refers to himself only, in these two papers. The former is, what it purports to be, a serious tribute of praise to the dignified and elevating character of the great Charity by which he had been

fostered. It speaks chiefly of the young scholar's pride in the antiquity of the foundation and the monastic customs and ritual which had survived into modern times; of the Founder, "that godly and royal child, King Edward VI., the flower of the Tudor name—the young flower that was untimely cropped, as it began to fill our land with its early odours—the boy-patron of boys—the serious and holy child who walked with Cranmer and Ridley," with many touching reminiscences of the happy days spent in country excursions or visits to the sights of London. But in calling up these recollections it seems to have struck Lamb that his old school, like other institutions, had more than one side, and that the grievances of schoolboys, real and imaginary, as well as the humorous side of some of the regulations and traditions of the school, might supply material for another picture not less interesting. Accordingly, under the disguise of the signature *Elia*, he wrote a second account of his school, purporting to be a corrective of the overcolouring employed by "Mr. Lamb" in the former account. The writer affects to be a second witness called in to supplement the evidence of the first. "I remember L. at school," writes Lamb, under the signature of *Elia*. "It happens very oddly that my own standing at Christ's was nearly corresponding to his; and with all gratitude to him for his enthusiasm for the cloisters, I think he has contrived to bring together whatever can be said in praise of

them, dropping all the other side of the argument most ingeniously." This other side Lamb proceeds, with charming humour, to set forth, and he does so in the character of one, a "poor friendless boy," whose parents were far away at "sweet Calne, in Wiltshire," after which his heart was ever yearning. The friendless boy whose personality is thus assumed was young Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had entered the school the same year as Lamb, though three years his senior. Coleridge and Lamb were school-fellows for the whole seven years of the latter's residence, and from this early association arose a friendship as memorable as any in English Literature. "Sweet Calne, in Wiltshire," was thus one of Lamb's innocent mystifications. It was to the old home at "sweet Ottery St. Mary," in Devonshire, that young Samuel Taylor's thoughts turned, when he took his lonely country rambles, or shivered at the cold windows of the print-shops to while away a winter's holiday.

In the character of Coleridge—though even here the dramatic position is not strictly sustained—Lamb goes on to relate, in the third person, many incidents of his own boyish life, which differed of necessity from his friend's. Charles Lamb was not troubled how to get through a winter's day, for he had shelter and friendly faces within easy reach of the school. "He had the privilege of going to see them, almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction which was denied to us. The

present worthy sub-treasurer to the Inner Temple can explain how that happened. He had his tea and hot rolls in the morning, while we were battening upon our quarter of a penny-loaf moistened with attenuated small-beer, in wooden piggins, smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from." And the writer proceeds to draw a charming picture of some emissary from Lamb's home, his "maid or aunt," bringing him some home-cooked dainty, and squatting down on "some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters," while he partook of it. It suggests a pleasant and happy side to this portion of Charles Lamb's life. Humble as his home was, still home was near, and not unmindful of him; and even taking into account the severities of the discipline and other of the schoolboy's natural grievances, it would seem as if Lamb's school-years had a genial influence on his mind and spirit.

As to the education, in the common acceptation of the word, which he gained during those seven years at Christ's Hospital, we may form a very just notion. When he left the school, in his fifteenth year, in November 1789, he was (according to his own statement made in more than one passage of his writings) deputy Grecian. Leigh Hunt, who entered the school two years after Lamb quitted it, and knew him intimately in later life, says the same thing. Talfourd seems to have applied to the school authorities for precise information, and gives a somewhat different account. He says that "in the

language of the school" he was "in Greek form, but not deputy Grecian." No such distinction is understood by "Blues" of a later date, but it may possibly mean that Lamb was doing deputy Grecians' work, though he was in some way technically disqualified from taking rank with them. "He had read," Talfourd goes on to tell us, "Virgil, Sallust, Terence, Lucian, and Xenophon, and had evinced considerable skill in the niceties of Latin composition." Latin, not Greek, was certainly his strong point, and with Terence especially he shows a familiar acquaintance. He wrote colloquial Latin with great readiness, and in turning nursery rhymes into that language, as well as in one or two more serious attempts, there are proofs of an ease of expression very creditable to the scholarship of a boy of fourteen. And if (as appears certain) Lamb, though not in the highest form at Christ's Hospital, had the benefit of the teaching of the head-master, the Rev. James Boyer, we have good reason for knowing that, pedant and tyrant though Boyer may have been, he was no bad trainer for such endowments as Coleridge's and Lamb's.

Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, has drawn a companion picture of the better side of Christ's Hospital discipline, which may judiciously be compared with Lamb's. "At school I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time a very severe master. He early moulded my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero,

of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and again of Virgil to Ovid. He habituated me to compare Lucretius (in such extracts as I then read), Terence, and above all, the chaster poems of Catullus, not only with the Roman poets of the so-called silver and brazen ages, but with even those of the Augustan era; and on grounds of plain sense and universal logic, to see and assert the superiority of the former, in the truth and nativeness both of their thoughts and diction. At the same time that we were studying the Greek tragic poets, he made us read Shakespeare and Milton as lessons; and they were the lessons, too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to escape his censure. I learnt from him that poetry, even that of the loftiest, and seemingly that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own as severe as that of science, and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word; and I well remember that, availing himself of the synonyms to the Homer of Didymus, he made us attempt to show, with regard to each, why it would not have answered the same purpose, and wherein consisted the peculiar fitness of the word in the original text." Such a teacher, according to Coleridge, was the guiding spirit of Christ's Hospital; and even allowing for Coleridge having in later life looked back with magnifying eyes upon those

early lessons, and *read into* Boyer's teaching something that belonged rather to the learner than the teacher, we need not doubt how great were the young student's obligations to his master. Lamb, who was three years younger, and never reached the same position in the school, may not have benefited directly by this method of Boyer's, but he was the intimate companion of the elder schoolboy, and whatever Boyer taught we may be sure was handed on in some form or other to Lamb, tinged though it may have been by the wondrous individuality of his friend.

For the influence of Coleridge over Lamb, during these school-days and afterwards, is one of the most important elements a biographer of Lamb has to take account of. The boy, Samuel Taylor, had entered the school, as we have seen, in the same year. He was a lonely, dreamy lad, not living wholly apart from the pastimes of his companions, wandering with them into the country, and bathing in the New River, on the holidays of summer, but taking his pleasure on the whole sadly, loving above all things knowledge, and greedily devouring whatever of that kind came in his way. Middleton, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, at the time a Grecian in the school, found him one day reading Virgil in his play-hour, for his own amusement, and reported the circumstance to Boyer, who acted upon it by fostering henceforth in every way his pupil's talent. A stranger who met the boy one day in the

London streets, lost in some day-dream, and moving his arms as one who "spreadeth forth his hands to swim," extracted from him the confession that he was only thinking of Leander and the Hellespont. The stranger, impressed with the boy's love of books, subscribed for him to a library in the neighbourhood of the school, and young Coleridge proceeded, as he has told us, to read "*through* the catalogue, folios and all, whether I understood them or did not understand them, running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes which I was entitled to have daily." With a full consciousness, as is apparent, of his power, he seems at this age to have had no desire for distinction, but only for enlarged experience. At one time he wanted to be apprenticed to a shoemaker, whose wife had shown him some kindness. At a later time, encouraged by the example of his elder brother, who had come up to walk the London Hospital, he conceived a passion for the medical profession and read every book on doctoring he could lay his hands on. He went through a phase of atheism—again, probably, out of sheer curiosity—until he was judiciously (so he said) flogged out of it by Boyer. And meantime he was reading metaphysics, and writing verses, in the true spirit of the future Coleridge. The lines he composed in his sixteenth year, suggested by his habit of living in the future till time present and future became in thought inextricably intermingled, surely entitle him to the name of the "marvellous boy,"

as truly as anything Chatterton had written at the same age:—

> On the wide level of a mountain's head
> (I knew not where, but 'twas some fairy place),
> Their pinions, ostrich-like, for sails outspread,
> Two lovely children run an endless race,
> A sister and a brother!
> That far outstripp'd the other;
> Yet ever runs she with reverted face,
> And looks and listens for the boy behind;
> For he, alas! is blind!
> O'er rough and smooth with even step he pass'd,
> And knows not whether he be first or last.

A striking feature of these lines is not so much that they are not the echo of any one school of poetry, but that in the special *metaphysic* of the thought, and the peculiar witchery of the verse, Coleridge here anticipated his maturest powers. It is on first thoughts strange that the boy who had read through whole libraries, "folios and all," and who could write verses such as these, should have been so deeply stirred as we know him to have been at the age of seventeen, when the small volume of fourteen sonnets of William Lisle Bowles fell into his hands. What was there, it might well be asked, in the poetry of Bowles, pathetic and graceful as it was, so to quicken the poetic impulse of Coleridge, that years afterwards he wrote of it to a friend as having "done his heart more good than all the other books he ever read, excepting his Bible." It is the fashion in the present day to

speak slightingly of Bowles, but his sonnets have unquestionable merit. Their language is melodious to a degree which perhaps only Collins in that century had surpassed, and it expressed a tender melancholy, which may have been inspired also by the study of the same poet. But Coleridge, the omnivorous reader, can hardly have been unacquainted with Gray and Collins, and the writer of such lines as—

> On the wide level of a mountain's head
> (I knew not where, but 't was some fairy place),

could have had little to learn as to the subtler music of versification, even from the greatest models. But it is significant that Coleridge couples these sonnets with the Bible, and he could hardly have done so without meaning it to be understood that Bowles's sonnets marked some change not purely artistic in his mind's growth. For the melancholy of Gray was constitutional, but the sadness of Bowles had its root in a close habit of introspection, and dwelling upon the moral side of things. The pensive beauty of such a sonnet as the well-known one on the *Influence of Time on Grief* wakes chords not often reached by the sentiment of the elder poets. There can be little doubt that at a critical point of Coleridge's life his moral nature was touched in ways for which he was profoundly grateful by these few poems of Bowles. He admits the obligation, indeed, in the first version of his sonnet to Bowles, when he confesses that "those soft strains" waked

in him "love and sympathy" as well as fancy, and made him henceforth "not callous to a brother's pains." And we are justified in believing that his young companion, Charles Lamb, was passing with him along the same path of deepening thoughtfulness. He, too, had felt the charm of Bowles's tenderness. In his earliest letters to Coleridge no other name is mentioned oftener and with more admiration; and writing to his friend a few years later, from the "drudgery of the desk's dead wood" at the India House, Lamb complains sorrowfully, "Not a soul loves Bowles here: scarce one has heard of Burns: few but laugh at me for reading my Testament."

It was in the year 1789, the year of the publication of Bowles's earliest sonnets, that Charles Lamb was removed from Christ's Hospital, and the companionship of the two friends was for a while interrupted. Lamb had found other congenial associates among the Blue Coats, and has embalmed their names in various ways in his essays; the two Le Grices from Cornwall, and James White, whose passion was for Shakspeare, and who afterwards compiled a collection of letters, as between Falstaff and his friends, in which he displayed some fancy, but chiefly a certain skill in taking to pieces the phraseology of the humorous characters in the historical plays and re-setting it in divers combinations. It was by these and other like accidents that the tastes and powers of the young Charles Lamb were being drawn forth in those seven years of school-

life. The Latin and Greek of the Rev. Matthew Field, the under grammar-master, even the more advanced instruction under James Boyer, had a less important bearing on the future *Elia* than the picturesque surroundings of the Temple, alternating with those of the foundation of Edward VI., and above all, the daily companionship of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Leigh Hunt, in his autobiography, has described with great humour and spirit the Christ's Hospital of his day, only two or three years later. Hunt left school at the age of fifteen, when he had attained the same rank as Lamb—deputy Grecian—and, as he tells us, for the same reason. He, too, had an impediment in his speech. "I did not stammer half so badly as I used, but it was understood that a Grecian was bound to deliver a public speech before he left school, and to go into the Church afterwards; and as I could do neither of these things, a Grecian I could not be." During his seven years in the school, Hunt often saw Charles Lamb, when he came to visit his old school-fellows, and recalled in after-life the "pensive, brown, handsome, and kindly face," and "the gait advancing with a motion from side to side, between involuntary unconsciousness and attempted ease." He dressed even then, Leigh Hunt adds, with that "Quaker-like plainness" that distinguished him all through life.

To leave school must have been to Charles Lamb a bitter sorrow. His aptitude for the special studies

of the school was undeniable, and to part from Coleridge must have been a still heavier blow. His biographers have followed Leigh Hunt in pointing out that the school exhibitions to the universities were given on the implied condition of the winners of them proceeding to holy orders, and that in Lamb's case his infirmity of speech made that impossible. But there were probably other reasons, not less cogent. It must have been of importance to his family that Charles should, with as little delay as possible, begin to earn his bread. There was poverty in his home, and the prospect of means becoming yet more straitened. There were deepening anxieties of still graver cast, as we shall see hereafter. The youngest child of the family returned to share this poverty and these anxieties, and to learn thus early the meaning of that law of sacrifice to which he so cheerfully submitted for the remainder of his life.

CHAPTER II

FAMILY STRUGGLES AND SORROWS

1789—1797

CHAPTER II

FAMILY STRUGGLES AND SORROWS
1789—1797

IN two of Lamb's Essays of Elia, *My Relations*, and *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*, he has described various members of his own family, and among them his brother John and his sister Mary. These should be carefully read, in conjunction with the less studied utterances on the same theme in his letters, by those who would understand the conditions of that home of which he now became an inmate. Of the family of seven children born in the Temple to John and Elizabeth Lamb, only three survived, the two just mentioned and Charles. The elder brother, John, at the time of his brother's leaving school a young man of twenty-six, held a clerkship in the South-Sea House. Samuel Salt was a Deputy-Governor of the South-Sea House, and it was no doubt to his introduction that John Lamb owed the appointment, and it is evident that at the time he first comes under our notice, his position in the office was fairly lucrative, and that the young man, unmarried, and of pleasant artistic tastes, was living by himself, enjoying life, and not troubling himself too much about his poor relations in the Temple. The genial selfishness of his character is described with curious frankness by Charles, who

yet seemed to entertain a kind of admiration for the well-dressed dilettante who cast in this way a kind of reflected light of respectability upon his humble relatives. He even addresses a sonnet to his brother, and applauds him for keeping "the elder brother up in state." There is a touch of sarcasm here, perhaps; and there is a sadder vein of irony in the description in *My Relations:*—

"It does me good, as I walk towards the street of my daily avocation on some fine May morning, to meet him marching in a quite opposite direction, with a jolly handsome presence, and shining sanguine face that indicates some purchase in his eye—a Claude or a Hobbima—for much of his enviable leisure is consumed at Christie's and Phillips's, or where not, to pick up pictures and such gauds. On these occasions he mostly stoppeth me, to read a short lecture on the advantage a person like me possesses above himself, in having his time occupied with business which he *must do;* assureth me that he often feels it hang heavy on his hands; wishes he had fewer holidays; and goes off Westward Ho! chanting a tune to Pall Mall; perfectly convinced that he has convinced me, while I proceed in my opposite direction tuneless."

We feel that this picture needs no additional touches. "Marching in a quite opposite direction" was what John Lamb continued to do, in all respects, as concerned the dutiful and home-keeping members of his family. It was not to him that father

and mother, sister or brother, were to look for help in their great need. Wholly different was the other elder child, next to him in age, Mary Lamb, the *Bridget Elia* of the Essays. Ten years older than Charles, she filled a position to him in these boyish days rather of mother than of sister. It is clear that these two children from the earliest age depended much on one another for sympathy and support. The mother never understood or appreciated the daughter's worth, and the father, who seems to have married late in life, was already failing in health and powers when Charles left school. The brother and sister were therefore thrown upon one another for companionship and intellectual sympathy, when school friendships were for a while suspended. Mary Lamb shared from childhood her brother's taste for reading. "She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage." The spacious closet was, it would seem, the library of Samuel Salt, to which both she and Charles early had access. It was a blessed resource for them in face of the monotony and other discomforts of their home and against more serious evils. There was, as we have seen, a taint of mania in the family, inherited from the father's side. It appeared in different shapes in all three children, if we are to trust a casual remark in one of Charles's letters touching his brother

John. But in Mary Lamb there is reason to suppose that it had been a cause of anxiety to her parents from an early period of her life. In one of his earliest poems addressed to Charles Lamb, Coleridge speaks of him creeping round a "dear-loved sister's bed, with noiseless step," soothing each pang with fond solicitude. These claims upon his brotherly watchfulness fell to the lot of Charles while still a boy, and they were never relaxed during life. There was a pathetic truth in the prediction of Coleridge which followed:—

> Cheerily, dear Charles!
> Thou thy best friend shalt cherish many a year.

He continued to devote himself to this, his best friend, for more than forty years, and henceforth the lives of the brother and sister are such that the story of the one can hardly be told apart from the other.

It has been said that Lamb's first years were passed between the Temple and Christ's Hospital —between "cloister and cloister"—but there were happy holiday seasons when he had glimpses of a very different life. These were spent with his grandmother, Mary Field, at the old mansion of the Plumer family, Blakesware,[1] closely adjoining the pleasant village of Widford, in Hertfordshire. The Plumers had two residences in the county, one at

[1] Lamb disguised the name, in his well-known essay, as "Blakes-*moor* in Hertfordshire." He admits the identity in a letter to Bernard Barton of 10th August 1827.

Gilston, and the other just mentioned, a few miles distant. The latter was the house where the dowager Mrs. Plumer and younger children of the family resided. Sometimes there would be no members of the family to inhabit it, and at such times old Mrs. Field, who held the post of housekeeper for the last fifty or sixty years of her life, reigned supreme over the old place. Her three grandchildren were then often with her, and the old-fashioned mansion, with its decaying tapestries and carved chimneys, together with the tranquil, rural beauty of the gardens and the surrounding country, made an impression on the childish imagination of Lamb, which is not to be overlooked in considering the influences which moulded his thought and style. There were many ties of family affection binding him to Hertfordshire. His grandmother was a native of the county, and in the beautiful essay called *Mackery End* he has described a visit paid in later life to other relations, in the neighbourhood of Wheathampstead. It is noticeable how Lamb, the "scorner of the fields," as Wordsworth termed him, yet showed the true poet's appreciation of English rural scenery, whenever, at least, his heart was touched by any association of it with human joy or sorrow.

In 1792 Mrs. Field died at a good old age, and lies buried in the quiet churchyard of Widford. Lamb has preserved her memory in the tender tribute to her virtues, *The Grandame*, which appeared among his earliest published verses,—

> On the green hill top
> Hard by the house of prayer, a modest roof,
> And not distinguished from its neighbour-barn
> Save by a slender tapering length of spire,
> The Grandame sleeps. A plain stone barely tells
> The name and date to the chance passenger.

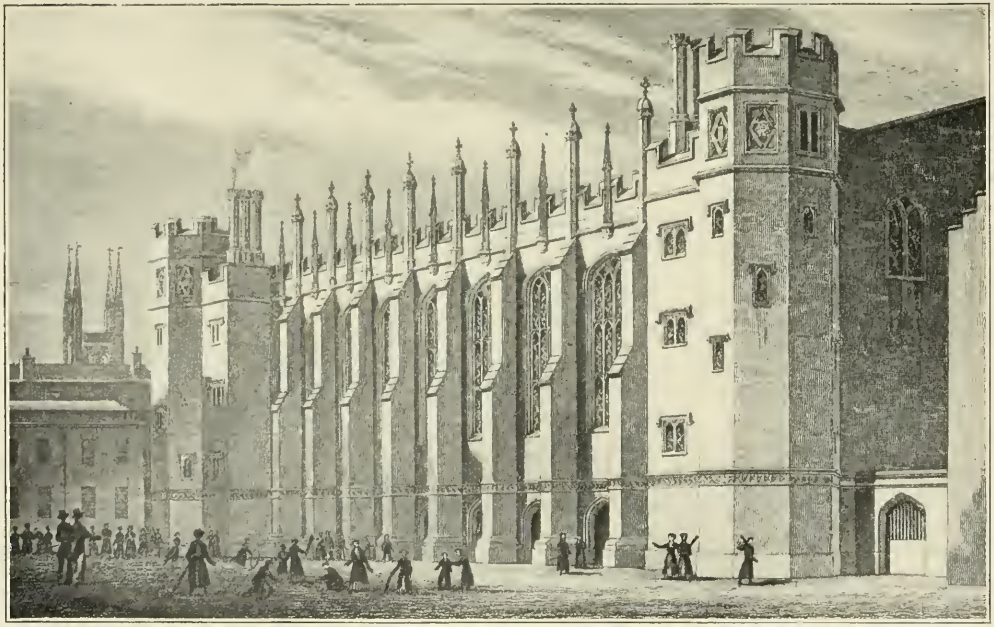
Time and weather have effaced even name and date,[1] but the stone is still pointed out in Widford churchyard. The old lady had suffered long from an incurable disease, and the young Charles Lamb had clearly found some of his earliest religious impressions deepened by watching her courage and resignation:—

> For she had studied patience in the school
> Of Christ; much comfort she had thence derived
> And was a *follower* of the Nazarene.

With her death the tie with Blakesware was not broken. The family of the Lambs had pleasant relations with other of the Widford people. Their constant friend, Mr. Randal Norris, the Sub-Treasurer of the Inner Temple, had connections with the place, and long after the death of Mrs. Field we find Lamb and his sister spending occasional holidays in the neighbourhood.

At some date, unfixed, in the two years following his removal from Christ's Hospital, Charles ob-

[1] Since these words were written, Mr. Lockwood, the rector of Widford, has had the lines of the inscription deepened, and it is now quite legible.



tained a post of some kind in the South-Sea House, where his brother John already held an appointment. No account of this period of his life remains to us, except such as can be drawn from the essay on the *South-Sea House*, written thirty years later in the *London Magazine* as the first of the papers signed *Elia*. The essay contains little or nothing about himself, and we are ignorant as to the duties and emoluments of his situation. It was not long, however, before he got promotion, in the form of a clerkship, in the accountant's office of the East India Company, obtained for him through the influence of Samuel Salt. His salary began at the rate of £70 a year, rising by gradual steps, and in the service of the East India Company Charles Lamb continued for the rest of his working life.

The clerkship in the India House must have been one of the last kind services of Samuel Salt to the family of his faithful clerk, for the old Bencher died in the same year, 1792. On his death, the two sets of chambers occupied by him passed into other hands, and the Lamb family had to quit the old home in Crown Office Row. For five-and-forty years John Lamb had served his master with true devotion, and Samuel Salt showed that he was not insensible of the obligation. By his will, dated 1786, he bequeaths "To my servant, John Lamb, who has lived with me near forty years," £500 South Sea stock; and "to Mrs. Lamb £100 in money, well deserved for her care and attention during my illness."

By a codicil, dated 20th December 1787, his executors are directed to employ John Lamb to receive the testator's "exchequer annuities of £210 and £14, during their term, and to pay him £10 a year for his trouble so long as he shall receive them." By a later codicil he gives another £100 to Mrs. Lamb. With this small capital, and the pension of £10, and the small salary of Charles as one of the youngest clerks in the India Office, the Lamb family were now left to begin the real battle of life. Whether they removed at once to Little Queen Street, Holborn, where we find them living four years later, does not appear. No light is thrown on the matter by any reference in the writings of Charles Lamb. No letter, or other fragment of writing by him, of earlier date than 1795, has been preserved. His work as a junior clerk absorbed the greater part of his day and of his year. In his first years of service his annual holiday was a single week, and this scanty breathing-space he generally spent in his favourite Hertfordshire. Then there were the occasional visits to the theatre, and it was the theatre which all through life shared with books the keenest love of Lamb and his sister. He has left us an account, in the essay *My First Play*, of his earliest experiences of this kind, beginning with *Artaxerxes*, and proceeding to *The Lady of the Manor* and *The Way of the World*, all seen by him when he was between six and seven years old. Seven years elapsed before he saw another play (for play-going was not per-

mitted to Christ's Hospital boys), and he admits that when after that interval he visited the theatre again, much of its former charm had vanished. The old classical tragedy and the old-world sentimental comedy alike failed to satisfy him, and it was not till he first saw Mrs. Siddons that the acted drama reasserted its power. "The theatre became to him once more," he tells us, "the most delightful of recreations." One of the earliest of his sonnets records the impression made upon him by this great actress. And as soon as we are admitted through his correspondence with Coleridge and others to know his tastes and habits, we find how important a part the drama and all its associations were playing in the direction of his genius.

Nor was the gloom of his home life unrelieved by occasional renewals of the intellectual companionship he had enjoyed at school. Coleridge had gone up to Jesus College, Cambridge, early in 1791, and except during the six months of his soldier's life in the Light Dragoons, remained there for the next four years. During this time he made occasional visits to London, when it was the great pleasure of the two school-fellows to meet at a tavern near Smithfield, the "Salutation and Cat" (probably a well-known rallying-point in the old Christ's days), and there to spend long evenings in discussion on literature and the other topics dear to both. Coleridge was now writing poems, and finding a temporary home for them in the columns of the *Morn-*

ing Chronicle. Among them appeared the sonnet on Mrs. Siddons, which was thus probably Lamb's first appearance in print. Both the young men were clearly dreaming of authorship, and Lamb's first avowed appearance as author was in the first volume of poems by Coleridge, published by Cottle, of Bristol, in the spring of the year 1796. "The effusions signed C. L.," says Coleridge in the preface to this volume, "were written by Mr. Charles Lamb of the India House. Independently of the signature, their superior merit would have sufficiently distinguished them." The effusions consisted of four sonnets, the one already noticed on Mrs. Siddons, one "written at midnight by the seaside after a voyage," and two, in every way the most noteworthy, dealing with the one love-romance of Charles Lamb's life. The sonnets have no special literary value, but the first of these has importance enough in its bearing on Lamb's character to justify quotation:—

> Was it some sweet device of Faëry
> That mocked my steps with many a lonely glade,
> And fancied wanderings with a fair-haired maid?
> Have these things been? Or what rare witchery,
> Impregning with delights the charmed air,
> Enlightened up the semblance of a smile
> In those fine eyes? methought they spake the while
> Soft soothing things, which might enforce despair
> To drop the murdering knife, and let go by
> His foul resolve. And does the lonely glade
> Still court the footsteps of the fair-haired maid?
> Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh?

> While I forlorn do wander, reckless where,
> And 'mid my wanderings meet no Anna there.

If the allusions in this and the following sonnet stood alone, we might well be asking, as in the case of Shakspeare's sonnets, whether the situation was not dramatic rather than autobiographical; but we have good reasons for inferring that the Anna, "the fair-haired maid" of these poems, had a real existence. His first love is referred to constantly in later letters and essays as Alice W——n, and it is easy to perceive that the Anna of the sonnets and this Alice W——n were the same person. In both cases the fair hair and the mild, pale blue eyes are the salient features. But the sonnets that tell of these, tell also of the "winding wood-walks green," and

> the little cottage which she loved,
> The cottage which did once my all contain.

From these alone we might infer that Lamb had first met the subject of them, not in London, but during his frequent visits to Blakesware. Lamb himself, often so curiously outspoken on the subject of his personal history, has nowhere directly told us where he met his Alice, but he cannot seriously have meant to keep the secret. In the essay *Blakesmoor in H——shire*, he recalls the picture-gallery with the old family portraits, and among them "that beauty with the cool, blue, pastoral drapery, and a lamb, that hung next the great bay window, with the bright yellow Hertfordshire hair,

so like my Alice!" His "fair-haired maid" was clearly from Hertfordshire. It will be seen hereafter what light is further thrown on the matter by Lamb himself. All that we know as certain, is that Lamb, while yet a boy, lost his heart, and that whether the course of true love ran smooth or not, he willingly submitted to forego the hoped-for tie, when a claim upon his devotion appeared in the closer circle of his home.

Unless, indeed, a more personal and even more terrible occasion of this sacrifice had arisen at an earlier date. We know, on his own admission, that, in the winter of 1795–96, Charles Lamb himself succumbed to the family malady, and passed some weeks in confinement. In the earliest of his letters that have been preserved, belonging to the early part of 1796, he tells his friend Coleridge the sad truth:—

"My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite any one. But mad I was! . . . Coleridge, it may convince you of my regard for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy."

The "other person" can have been no other than the fair-haired Alice, and if disappointed love was

the immediate cause of his derangement, the discovery in him of this tendency may have served to break off all relations between the lovers still more effectually. Wonderfully touching are the lines which, as he tells Coleridge in the same letter, were written by him in his prison-house in one of his lucid intervals:—

To My Sister

IF from my lips some angry accents fell,
Peevish complaint, or harsh reproof unkind,
'T was but the error of a sickly mind
And troubled thoughts, clouding the purer well
And waters clear, of Reason: and for me
Let this my verse the poor atonement be—
My verse, which thou to praise wert e'er inclined
Too highly, and with a partial eye to see
No blemish. Thou to me didst ever show
Kindest affection; and would'st oft-times lend
An ear to the despairing, love-sick lay,
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

The history of many past weeks or months seems written in these lines; the history of a hopeless attachment, a reason yielding to long distress of mind, and a sister's love already repaying by anticipation the "mighty debt" which in after days it was itself to owe.

This year, 1795–96, was indeed a memorable one in the annals of the brother and sister. The fortunes of the Lamb family were at low ebb. They were

in lodgings in Little Queen Street, Holborn, the mother a confirmed invalid, and the father sinking gradually into second childhood. Charles had been temporarily under restraint, and Mary Lamb, in addition to the increasing labour of ministering to her parents, was working for their common maintenance by taking in needle-work. It is not strange that under this pressure her own reason, so often threatened, at last gave way. It was in September of 1796 that the awful calamity of her life befell. A young apprentice girl, who was at work in the common sitting-room while dinner was preparing, appears to have excited the latent mania. Mary Lamb snatched a knife from the table, pursued the girl round the room, and finally stabbed to the heart her mother, who had interfered in the girl's behalf. It was Charles Lamb himself who seized the unhappy sister, and wrested the knife from her hand, but not before she had hurled in her rage other knives about the room, and wounded, though not fatally, the now almost imbecile father. *The Times* of a few days later relates that an inquest was held on the following day, and a verdict of insanity returned in the case of the unhappy daughter. Lamb's account of the event is given in a letter to Coleridge, of 27th September.

MY DEAREST FRIEND—White, or some of my friends, or the public papers by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that

have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines:—My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses—I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris, of the Bluecoat School,[1] has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with.[2] With me the "former things are passed away," and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us well in His keeping.

C. Lamb.

Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please; but if you publish, publish mine (I give

[1] Doubtless Mr. Randal Norris, the Under-Treasurer of the Inner Temple, whom Coleridge would best remember as a frequent visitor to Lamb in their school-days.

[2] A letter of Coleridge "to a friend in great anguish of mind on the sudden death of his mother," was first published by Mr. Gillman of Highgate in his unfinished *Life of Coleridge*. It will be found in the note to Lamb's letter in my edition of his correspondence.

free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

A second letter followed in less than a week, in a tone somewhat less forlorn.

YOUR letter was an inestimable treasure to me. It will be a comfort to you, I know, to know that our prospects are somewhat brighter. My poor dear, dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgments on our house, is restored to her senses; to a dreadful sense and recollection of what has past, awful to her mind and impressive (as it must be to the end of life), but tempered with religious resignation and the reasonings of a sound judgment, which, in this early stage, knows how to distinguish between a deed committed in a transient fit of frenzy, and the terrible guilt of a mother's murder. I have seen her. I found her, this morning, calm and serene; far, very far, from an indecent, forgetful serenity; she has a most affectionate and tender concern for what has happened. Indeed, from the beginning, frightful and hopeless as her disorder seemed, I had confidence enough in her strength of mind and religious principle, to look forward to a time when *even she* might recover tranquillity. God be praised, Coleridge, wonderful as it is to tell, I have never once been otherwise than collected and calm; even on the dreadful day, and in the midst of the terrible scene, I preserved a tranquillity which bystanders may have

construed into indifference—a tranquillity not of despair. Is it folly or sin in me to say that it was a religious principle that *most* supported me? I allow much to other favourable circumstances. I felt that I had something else to do than to regret. On that first evening, my aunt was lying insensible, to all appearance like one dying,—my father, with his poor forehead plastered over, from a wound he had received from a daughter dearly loved by him, who loved him no less dearly,—my mother a dead and murdered corpse in the next room,—yet was I wonderfully supported. I closed not my eyes in sleep that night, but lay without terrors and without despair. I have lost no sleep since. I had been long used not to rest in things of sense; had endeavoured after a comprehension of mind, unsatisfied with the "ignorant present time," and this kept me up. I had the whole weight of the family thrown on me; for my brother, little disposed (I speak not without tenderness for him) at any time to take care of old age and infirmities, had now, with his bad leg, an exemption from such duties, and I was now left alone. . . .

Our friends here have been very good. Sam Le Grice, who was then in town, was with me the three or four first days, and was as a brother to me; gave up every hour of his time, to the very hurting of his health and spirits, in constant attendance and humouring my poor father; talked with him, read to him, played at cribbage with him (for so short is

the old man's recollection that he was playing at cards, as though nothing had happened, while the coroner's inquest was sitting over the way). Samuel wept tenderly when he went away, for his mother wrote him a very severe letter on his loitering so long in town, and he was forced to go. Mr. Norris, of Christ's Hospital,[1] has been as a father to me; Mrs. Norris as a mother, though we had few claims on them. A gentleman, brother to my godmother, from whom we never had right or reason to expect any such assistance, sent my father £20; and to crown all these God's blessings to our family at such a time, an old lady, a cousin of my father's and aunt's, a gentlewoman of fortune, is to take my aunt and make her comfortable for the short remainder of her days. My aunt is recovered, and as well as ever, and highly pleased at thoughts of going; and has generously given up the interest of her little money (which was formerly paid my father for her board) wholly and solely to my sister's use. Reckoning this, we have, Daddy and I, for our two selves and an old maid-servant to look after him when I am out, which will be necessary, £170, or £180 rather, a year, out of which we can spare £50 or £60 at least for Mary while she stays at Islington, where she must and shall stay during her father's life,

[1] Mr. Randal Norris, Under-Treasurer of the Inner Temple, for many years the faithful friend of the Lamb family. Mr. Norris was twice married. It was through his second wife (not the Mrs. Norris mentioned above) that he was connected with Widford in Hertfordshire.

for his and her comfort. I know John will make speeches about it, but she shall not go into an hospital. The good lady of the madhouse, and her daughter—an elegant, sweet-behaved young lady—love her and are taken with her amazingly; and I know from her own mouth she loves them, and longs to be with them as much. Poor thing! they say she was but the other morning saying she knew she must go to Bethlehem for life; that one of her brothers would have it so, but the other would wish it not, but be obliged to go with the stream; that she had often as she passed Bethlehem thought it likely, "here it may be my fate to end my days," conscious of a certain flightiness in her poor head oftentimes, and mindful of more than one severe illness of that nature before. A legacy of £100, which my father will have at Christmas, and this £20 I mentioned before, with what is in the house, will much more than set us clear. If my father, an old servant-maid, and I can't live, and live comfortably, on £130 or £120 a year, we ought to burn by slow fires; and I almost would, that Mary might not go into an hospital. Let me not leave one unfavourable impression on your mind respecting my brother. Since this has happened he has been very kind and brotherly, but I fear for his mind. He has taken his ease in the world, and is not fit himself to struggle with difficulties, nor has much accustomed himself to throw himself into their way; and I know his language is already, "Charles, you must take care of

yourself, you must not abridge yourself of a single pleasure you have been used to," etc., etc., and in that style of talking. But you, a necessarian, can respect a difference of mind, and love what is amiable in a character not perfect. He has been very good, but I fear for his mind. Thank God, I can unconnect myself with him, and shall manage all my father's monies in future myself if I take charge of Daddy, which poor John has not even hinted a wish, at any future time even, to share with me. The lady at this madhouse assures me that I may dismiss immediately both doctor and apothecary, retaining occasionally a composing draught or so for a while; and there is a less expensive establishment in her house, where she will not only have a room and nurse to herself for £50 or guineas a year—the outside would be £60—you know by economy how much more even I shall be able to spare for her comforts. She will, I fancy, if she stays make one of the family, rather than of the patients; the old and young ladies I like exceedingly, and she loves them dearly; and they, as the saying is, take to her extraordinarily, if it is extraordinary that people who see my sister should love her. Of all the people I ever saw in the world, my poor sister was most and thoroughly devoid of the quality of selfishness. I will enlarge upon her qualities, dearest soul, in a future letter for my own comfort, for I understand her thoroughly; and if I mistake not, in the most trying situation that a human being can be found

in, she will be found (I speak not with sufficient humility, I fear, but humanly and foolishly speaking)—she will be found, I trust, uniformly great and amiable. God keep her in her present mind, to whom be thanks and praise for all His dispensations to mankind.

It is necessary for the full understanding of what Charles Lamb was, and of the life that lay before him, that this deeply interesting account should be given in his own words. Anything that a biographer might add would only weaken the picture of courage, dutifulness, and affection here presented. The only fitting sequel to it is the history of the remaining five-and-thirty years, in which he fulfilled so nobly and consistently his self-imposed task.

Poor Mrs. Lamb was laid to rest in the churchyard of St. Andrew's, Holborn, on the 26th of this month, and it then became absolutely necessary for the family to make another change of residence. Charles, with his father, now between seventy and eighty years of age and shattered in body and mind, removed to Pentonville. The old aunt, Sarah Lamb ("Aunt Hetty"), did not long find shelter with the capricious relative who had undertaken the charge of her, and returned to share the new home at Pentonville, until her death in the following February. Mary Lamb remained for some weeks in the asylum at Hoxton, until, on certain conditions arranged between Charles and the proper authorities, her re-

lease from confinement was brought about, and the brother's guardianship accepted as sufficient for the future. The mania which had once attacked Charles never returned. Either the shock of calamity, or the controlling power of the vow he had laid on himself, overmastered the inherited tendency. But in the case of Mary Lamb it returned at frequent intervals through life, never again, happily, with any disastrous result. The attacks seem to have been generally attended with forewarnings, which enabled the brother and sister to take the necessary measures, and a friend of the Lambs has related how on one occasion he met the brother and sister, at such a season, walking hand in hand across the fields to the old asylum, both bathed in tears.

CHAPTER III

FIRST EXPERIMENTS IN LITERATURE

1797—1800

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THE opening of the year 1797 found Charles Lamb with his helpless father, and his old aunt "Hetty" (her actual name was *Sarah* Lamb), in rooms in Chapel Street, Pentonville. Mary Lamb, who had remained in the asylum at Islington for many weeks after her mother's death, was still exiled from her home. Charles had wisely resolved that she must not rejoin her family during the father's lifetime; and later on we find her established in a lodging at Hackney, where her brother spent with her his Sundays and holidays, and what other time he could spare from his invalid father. Aunt Hetty had returned, only to die. Lamb writes to Coleridge in January, "My poor old aunt whom you have seen, the kindest, goodest creature to me when I was at school; who used to toddle there to bring me good things, when I, school-boy like, only despised her for it, and used to be ashamed to see her come and sit herself down on the old coal-hole steps as we went into the old grammar-school, and open her apron, and bring out her basin, with some nice thing she had caused to be saved for me; the good old creature is now on her death-bed. . . . She says, poor thing, she is glad she is come home to die with

me." The end came within a few days, and on 13th February Charles again writes, "This afternoon I attend the funeral of my poor old aunt, who died on Thursday."[1]

Charles was now left, the solitary companion of his aged father, who was to survive yet two years longer. Of the domestic history of the pair during this time we know almost nothing. Lamb's correspondence with Coleridge was intermitted for eighteen months, during Coleridge's absence from England, and there was no other correspondent to whom he cared to confide his family troubles. But happily for his sanity of mind, he was beginning to find friends and interests in new directions.

What books had been to him all his life, and what education he had been finding in them, is evident from his earliest extant letters. His published correspondence begins in the spring of 1796, with a letter to Coleridge, then at Bristol, and from this and other letters of the same year we see the first signs of that variety of literary taste so noteworthy in a young man of twenty-one. The letters of this year are mainly on critical subjects. He encloses his own sonnets, and points out the passages in elder writers, Parnell or Cowley, to which he has been indebted. Or he acknowledges poems of Coleridge sent for his criticism, and proceeds to express his

[1] In the Burial Register of St. Andrew's, Holborn, an entry appears of the funeral on this day of "Sarah Lamb, from St. James's, Clerkenwell."

opinion on them with frankness. He had been introduced to Southey, by Coleridge, some time in 1795, and he writes to the latter, "With *Joan of Arc* I have been delighted, amazed; I had not presumed to expect anything of such excellence from Southey. Why, the poem is alone sufficient to redeem the character of the age we live in from the imputation of degenerating in poetry, were there no such beings extant as Burns, Bowles, and Cowper, and——; fill up the blank how you please." It is noticeable also how prompt the young man was to discover the real significance of the poetic revival of the latter years of the eighteenth century. Burns he elsewhere mentions at this time to Coleridge in stronger terms of enthusiasm as having been the "God of my idolatry, as Bowles was of yours," nor was he less capable of appreciating the "divine chit-chat" of Cowper. The real greatness of Wordsworth he was one of the earliest to discover and to proclaim. And at the same time his imagination was being stirred by the romantic impulse that was coming from Germany. "Have you read," he asks Coleridge, "the ballad called 'Leonora' in the second number of the *Monthly Magazine?* If you have! ! ! There is another fine song, from the same author (Bürger), in the third number, of scarce inferior merit." But still more remarkable in the intellectual history of so young a man is the acquaintance he shows with the earlier English authors, at a time when the revival of Shakspearian study was comparatively

recent, and when the other Elizabethan dramatists were all but unknown save to the archæologist. We must suppose that the library of Samuel Salt was more than usually rich in old folios, for certainly Lamb had not only "browsed" (to use his own expression), but had read and criticised deeply, as well as discursively. In a letter to Coleridge of this same year, 1796, he quotes with enthusiasm the rather artificial lines of Massinger in *A Very Woman*, pointing out the "fine effect of the double endings."

> Not far from where my father lives, a lady,
> A neighbour by, blest with as great a beauty
> As nature durst bestow without undoing,
> Dwelt, and most happily, as I thought then,
> And blest the house a thousand times she dwelt in.
> This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
> When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
> Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
> In all the bravery my friends could show me,
> In all the faith my innocence could give me,
> In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
> And all the broken sighs my sick heart lend me,
> I sued and served; long did I serve this lady,
> Long was my travail, long my trade to win her;
> With all the duty of my soul I served her.[1]

Beaumont and Fletcher he quotes with no less delight, "in which authors I can't help thinking there is a greater richness of poetical fancy than in any one, Shakspeare excepted." Again, he asks the

[1] These lines are interesting as having been chosen by Lamb for a "motto" to his first published poems. As so used, they clearly bore reference to his own patient wooing at that time.

same inseparable friend, "Among all your quaint readings did you ever light upon *Walton's Complete Angler?* I asked you the question once before; it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart; there are many choice old verses interspersed in it: it would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it: it would Christianise every discordant angry passion." And while thus discursive in his older reading, he was hardly less so in the literature of his own century. He had been fascinated by the *Confessions* of Rousseau, and was for a time at least under the influence of the sentimental school of novelists, the followers of Richardson and Sterne in England. So varied was the field of authors and subjects on which his style was being formed and his fancy nourished.

Long afterwards, in his essay on *Books and Reading*, he boasted that he could read anything which he called *a book*. "I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low." But this versatility of sympathy, which was at the root of so large a part of both matter and manner when he at length discovered where his real strength lay, had the effect of delaying that discovery for some time. His first essays in literature were mainly imitative, and though there is not one of them that is without his peculiar charm, or that a lover of Charles Lamb would willingly let die, they are more interesting from the fact of their authorship, and from the light they throw on

the growth of Lamb's mind, than for their intrinsic value.

Meantime, his lonely life in Chapel Street, Pentonville, was cheered by the acquisition of some new friends, chiefly introduced by Coleridge. He had known Southey since 1795, and some time in the following year, or early in 1797, he had formed a closer bond of sympathy with Charles Lloyd, son of a banker of Birmingham, a young man of poetic taste and melancholy temperament, who had taken up his abode, for the sake of intellectual companionship, with Coleridge at Bristol. One of the first results of this companionship was a second literary venture in which the new friend took a share. A second edition of *Poems by S. T. Coleridge, to which are now added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd*, appeared at Bristol, in the summer of 1797, published by Coleridge's devoted admirer, Joseph Cottle.

"There were inserted in my former edition," writes Coleridge in the preface, "a few sonnets of my friend and old school-fellow, Charles Lamb. He has now communicated to me a complete collection of all his poems; quæ qui non prorsus amet, illum omnes et virtutes et veneres odere." The phrase is a trifle grandiloquent to describe the short list—some fifteen in all—of sonnets and occasional verses here printed. Nor is there anything in their style to indicate the influence of new models. A tender grace of the type of his old favourite, Bowles,

is still their chief merit, and they are interesting as showing how deeply the events of the past few years had stirred the religious side of Charles Lamb's nature. A review of the day characterised the manner of Lamb and Lloyd as "plaintive," and the epithet is not ill-chosen. Lamb was still living chiefly in the past, and the thought of his sister, and recollection of the pious "Grandame" in Hertfordshire, with kindred memories of his own childhood and disappointed affections, make the subject-matter of almost all the verse. A little allegorical poem, with the title of "A Vision of Repentance," relegated to an appendix in this same volume, marks the most sacred confidence that Lamb ever gave to the world as to his meditations on the mystery of evil.

It is unlikely that this little venture brought any profit to its authors, or that a subsequent volume of blank verse by Lamb and Lloyd in the following year was more remunerative. To Lloyd the question was doubtless of less importance; but Lamb was anxious for his sister's sake to add to his scanty income, and with this view he resolved to make an experiment in prose fiction. In the year 1798 he composed his little story, bearing the title, as originally issued, of *A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret.*

This "miniature romance," as Talfourd calls it, is perhaps better known after the essays of Elia, than any of Lamb's writings, and the secret of its charm, in the face of improbabilities and unrealities

of many kinds, is one of the curiosities of literature. The story itself is built up of the most heterogeneous materials. The idea of the story, the ruin of a village maiden, Rosamund Gray, by a melodramatic villain with the "uncommon" name of Matravis, was suggested to Lamb, as he admits in a letter to Southey, by a "foolish" (and it must be added, a very scurrilous) old ballad about "an old woman clothed in grey." The name of his heroine he borrowed from some verses of his friend Lloyd's (not included in their joint volume), and that of the villain from one of the ruffians employed to murder the king in Marlowe's *Edward the Second*,—that death-scene which he afterwards told the world "moved pity and terror beyond any scene ancient or modern" with which he was acquainted. The conduct of the little story bears strong traces of the influence of Richardson and Mackenzie, and a rather forced reference to the latter's *Julia de Roubigné* seems to show where he had lately been reading. A portion of the narrative is conducted by correspondence between the two well-bred young ladies of the story, and when one of them begins a letter to her cousin, "Health, innocence, and beauty shall be thy bridesmaids, my sweet cousin," we are at once aware in what school of polite letter-writing the author had studied. After the heroine, the two principal characters are a brother and sister, Allan and Elinor Clare, the relation between whom (the sister is represented as just ten years older than her

brother) is borrowed almost without disguise from that of Lamb and his sister Mary. "Elinor Clare was the best good creature, the least selfish human being I ever knew, always at work for other people's good, planning other people's happiness, continually forgetful to consult for her own personal gratifications, except indirectly in the welfare of another; while her parents lived, the most attentive of daughters; since they died, the kindest of sisters. I never knew but *one* like her." There is besides a school-fellow of Allan's, who precedes him to college, evidently a recollection of the school-friendship with Coleridge. But still more significant, as showing the personal element in the little romance, is the circumstance that Lamb lays the scene of it in that Hertfordshire village of Widford where so many of his own happiest hours had been spent, and that the heroine, Rosamund Gray, is drawn with those features on which he was never weary of dwelling in the object of his own boyish passion. Rosamund, with the pale blue eyes and the "yellow Hertfordshire hair," is but a fresh copy of his Anna and his Alice. That Rosamund Gray had an actual counterpart in real life seems certain, and the little group of cottages, in one of which she dwelt with her old grandmother, is still shown near the village of Widford, about half a mile from the site of the old mansion of Blakesware. And it is the tradition of the village, and believed by those who have the best means of judging, that "Rosa-

mund Gray" (her real name was equally remote from this, and from Alice W——n) was Charles Lamb's first and only love. Her fair hair and eyes, her goodness, and (we may assume) her poverty were drawn from life. The rest of the story in which she bears a part is of course pure fiction. The Anna of the sonnets made a prosperous marriage, and lived to a good old age.[1]

As if Lamb were resolved to give his little tale the character of personal "confessions," he has contrived to introduce into it, by quotation or allusion, all his favourite writers, from Walton and Wither to Mackenzie and Burns. But of more interest from this point of view than any resemblances of detail, is the shadow, as of recent calamity, that rests upon the story, and the strain of religious emotion that pervades it. It is this that gives the romance, conventional as it is for the most part in its treatment of life and manners, its real attractiveness. It is redolent of Lamb's native sweetness of heart, delicacy of feeling, and undefinable charm of style. And these qualities did not altogether fail to attract attention. The little venture was a moderate suc-

[1] Her actual name was, I am well assured, Ann Simmons. My authority is Mrs. Arthur Tween, daughter of Lamb's old friend Randal Norris, and herself familiar from childhood with the people and traditions of Widford. Ann Simmons married Mr. Bartram, a silversmith and pawnbroker of Princes Street, Leicester Square; and one of their daughters became the wife of the late Mr. William Coulson, the eminent surgeon. There is probably no one now living to throw any further light upon the course of this, Charles Lamb's earliest love.

cess, and brought its author some "few guineas." One tribute to its merits was paid many years later, which, we may hope, did not fail to reach the author. Shelley, writing to Leigh Hunt from Leghorn, in 1819, and acknowledging the receipt of a parcel of books, adds, "With it came, too, Lamb's works. What a lovely thing is his *Rosamund Gray!* How much knowledge of the sweetest and deepest part of our nature in it! When I think of such a mind as Lamb's, when I see how unnoticed remain things of such exquisite and complete perfection, what should I hope for myself, if I had not higher objects in view than fame?"

There is scanty material for the biographer of Lamb during these first four years of struggling poverty. The few events that varied his monotonous life are to be gathered from the letters to Coleridge and Southey, written during this period. The former was married, and living at Nether Stowey,[1] near the Quantock Hills, where Charles paid him apparently a first visit during one of his short holidays in the summer of 1797. This visit was made memorable by a slight accident that befell Coleridge on the day of Lamb's arrival, and forced him to remain at home while his visitors explored the surrounding country. Left alone in his garden, he composed the curiously Wordsworthian lines, bear-

[1] Coleridge had settled in this small country town in order to be near his friend, Thomas Poole. See Mrs. Henry Sandford's charming book, *Thomas Poole and his Friends.*

ing for title (he was perhaps thinking of Ferdinand in the *Tempest*), "This lime-tree bower my prison," in which he apostrophises Lamb as the "gentle-hearted Charles," and addresses him as one who had—

> Hungered after nature, many a year
> In the great city pent, winning thy way
> With sad and patient zeal, through evil and pain
> And strange calamity.

Charles did not quite relish the epithet "gentle-hearted," and showed that he winced under a title that savoured a little of pity or condescension. Indeed, it is evident, in spite of the real affection that Lamb never ceased to feel for Coleridge, that the relations between the friends were often strained during these earlier days. This year, 1797, was that of the joint volume, and the mutual criticism indulged so freely by both was leaving a little soreness behind. Then there was the question of precedence between Lamb and Lloyd in this same volume, which was settled in Lloyd's favour, not without a few pangs, confessed by Lamb himself. And when, in the following year, Coleridge was on the eve of his visit to Germany with the Wordsworths, a foolish message of his, "If Lamb requires any knowledge, let him apply to me," had been repeated to Lamb by some injudicious friend, and did not tend to improve matters. Lamb retaliated by sending Coleridge a grimly humorous list of "Theses quædam Theologicæ," to be by him "defended or

oppugned (or both) at Leipsic or Göttingen." Numbers five and six in this list may be given as a sample. "Whether the higher order of Seraphim illuminati ever sneer?" "Whether pure intelligences can love, or whether they can love anything besides pure intellect?" The rest are in the same vein, and if they have any point at all, it must lie in a certain assumption of intellectual superiority in which Coleridge had indulged to the annoyance of his friend. There was a temporary soreness in the heart of Charles on parting with his old companion. There had been a grievance of the same kind before. It had been bitterly repented of, even in a flood of tears. To the beginning of this year, 1798, belong the touching verses composed in the same spirit of self-confession that has marked so much of his writing up to this period, about the "old familiar faces." In their earliest shape they are more directly autobiographical. Lamb afterwards omitted the first stanza, and gave the lines a less personal character.

Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?
I had a mother, but she died, and left me—
Died prematurely in a day of horrors—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have had playmates, I have had companions
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women.
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I had a friend, a kinder friend has no man.
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly!
Left him to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghostlike I paced round the haunts of my childhood.
Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother;
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling,
So might we talk of the old familiar faces.

For some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me, all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

The "friend of my bosom" was undoubtedly Coleridge, whose coldness and waywardness at this juncture had not long availed to cancel the memory of old and sacred ties. The friend whom Lamb had "left abruptly" would seem to have been the new associate Charles Lloyd. In a letter to Coleridge of this very month (28th January) Lamb mentions a momentary breach with his friend. "I had well nigh quarrelled," he writes, "with Charles Lloyd."[1] If Lamb was at this difficult crisis moody and sensitive, so also was Lloyd—even then a prey to the

[1] For fuller particulars of Lamb's introduction to the Lloyd family, and of his subsequent relations with them, see the interesting volume, *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds*, edited by Mr. E. V. Lucas.

melancholy which clung to him through life, and it was well for Lamb that on Coleridge leaving England he had some more genial companionship to take refuge in. Three years before, he had made the acquaintance of Southey. In the summer of 1797 he and Lloyd had passed a fortnight under his roof in Hampshire. And now that Coleridge was far away, it was Southey who naturally took his place as literary adviser and confidant.

We gather from Lamb's letters to Southey, in 1798–99, that this change of association for the time was good for him. Coleridge and Lloyd were of temperaments too nearly akin to Lamb's to be wholly serviceable in these days, when the calamities in his family still overshadowed him. The friendship of Southey, the healthy-natured, the industrious, and the methodical, was a wholesome change of atmosphere. Southey was now living at Westbury-on-Trym, near Bristol. Though only a few months Lamb's senior, he had been three years a married man, and was valiantly working to support his young wife by that craft of literature which he followed so patiently to his life's end. In this year, 1798, he was in his sweetest and most humorous ballad vein. It was the year of the *Well of St. Keyne* and the *Battle of Blenheim*, and other of those shorter pieces by which Southey will always be most widely known. He had not failed to discover Lamb's value as a critic, and each eclogue or ballad, as it is written, is submitted to his judgment.

The result of this change of interest is shown in a marked difference of tone and style in Lamb's letters. He is less sad and meditative, and begins to exhibit that peculiar playfulness which we associate with the future Elia. One day he writes: "My tailor has brought me home a new coat, lapelled, with a velvet collar. He assures me everybody wears velvet collars now. Some are born fashionable, some achieve fashion, and others, like your humble servant, have fashion thrust upon them." And his remarks on Southey's ode *To a Spider* (in which he justly notes the metre as its chief merit, and wonders that "Burns had not hit upon it") are followed by a discursive pleasantry having the true Elia ring, "I love this sort of poems that open a new intercourse with the most despised of the animal and insect race. I think this vein may be further opened. Peter Pindar hath very prettily apostrophised a fly; Burns hath his mouse and his louse; Coleridge, less successfully, hath made overtures of intimacy to a jackass, therein only following, at unresembling distance, Sterne and greater Cervantes. Besides these, I know of no other examples of breaking down the partition between us and our 'poor earth-born companions.'" And the suggestion that follows, that Southey should undertake a series of poems, with the object of awakening sympathy for animals too generally ill-treated or held in disgust, is most characteristic, both in matter and manner. Indeed it is in these earlier letters to Southey, rather than in

his poetry or in *Rosamund Gray*, that Charles Lamb was feeling the way to his true place in literature. Already we observe a vein of reflectiveness and a curious felicity of style which owe nothing to any predecessor. And if his humour, even in his lightest moods, has a tinge of sadness, it is not to be accounted for only by the suffering he had passed through. It belonged in fact to the profound humanity of its author, to the circumstance that with him, as with all true humorists, humour was but one side of an acute and almost painful sympathy.

At the close of the year 1799 Coleridge returned from Germany, and the intercourse between the two friends was at once resumed, never again to be interrupted. Mary Lamb was once more under her brother's care at Pentonville, for the death of the old father in the spring of this year had made the long-desired reunion possible. But the change proved to be the beginning of fresh troubles. It appears from a letter of Charles to Coleridge, in the spring of 1800, that there was no alleviation of his burden of constant anxiety. The faithful old servant of many years had died, after a few days' illness, and Lamb writes, "Mary, in consequence of fatigue and anxiety, is fallen ill again, and I was obliged to remove her yesterday. I am left alone in a house with nothing but Hetty's dead body to keep me company. To-morrow I bury her, and then I shall be quite alone, with nothing but a cat to remind me that the house has been full of living beings like myself.

My heart is quite sunk, and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better again, but her constantly being liable to these attacks is dreadful; nor is it the least of our evils that her case and all our story is so well known around us. We are in a manner *marked*. Excuse my troubling you, but I have nobody by me to speak to me. I slept out last night, not being able to endure the change and the stillness; but I did not sleep well, and I must come back to my own bed. I am going to try and get a friend to come and be with me to-morrow. I am completely shipwrecked. My head is quite bad. I almost wish that Mary were dead. God bless you. Love to Sarah and little Hartley."

It is the solitary instance in which he allows us to see his patience and hopefulness for a moment failing him. That terrible sentence "we are in a manner *marked*" has not perhaps received its due weight, in the estimate of what the brother and sister were called upon to bear. It seems certain that if they were not actually driven from lodging to lodging, because the dreadful rumour of madness could not be shaken off, they were at least shunned and kept at a distance wherever they went. The rooms in Pentonville they soon received notice to quit, and it might have been difficult for them at this juncture to decide which way to turn for shelter, but for the good-nature of an old friend and school-fellow of Lamb's, John Matthew Gutch, then living in Southampton Buildings, Holborn.

Gutch, who was in business there as a law-stationer, offered the Lambs three rooms in his house, together with a share in the services of an old housekeeper. "I am in much better spirits," Charles writes to Manning in May, or June, 1800. "I have had a very eligible offer to lodge with a friend in town. He will have rooms to let at Midsummer; by which time I hope my sister will be well enough to join me. It is a great object to me to live in town, where we shall be much more *private*, and to quit a house and neighbourhood where poor Mary's disorder, so frequently recurring, has made us a sort of marked people. We can be nowhere private except in the midst of London. We shall be in a family where we visit very frequently; only my landlord and I have not yet come to a conclusion. He has a partner to consult. I am still on the tremble, for I do not know where we could go into lodgings that would not be, in many respects, highly exceptionable. Only God send Mary well again, and I hope all will be well!" To the rooms in Southampton Buildings they removed at Midsummer, and there they remained until Lady Day of the following year. Whether the "partner" proved intractable, or whether Gutch himself repented of his offer, we cannot say; but early in 1801 we learn from a letter of Charles to Manning that the brother and sister were once more to be cast upon the wide world of London to make a home. And then it was that Charles Lamb turned, perhaps because they were

more retired and secure from vulgar overlooking, to the old familiar and dearly-loved surroundings of his childhood. "I am going to change my lodgings," he writes, in a tone of cheerful looking-forward simply marvellous, considering the terrible cause of this fresh removal. "I am going to change my lodgings, having received a hint that it would be agreeable, at our Lady's next feast. I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms, which look out (when you stand a tip-toe) over the Thames and Surrey Hills, at the upper end of King's Bench Walks in the Temple. There I shall have all the privacy of a house without the encumbrance, and shall be able to lock my friends out as often as I desire to hold free converse with my immortal mind—for my present lodgings resemble a minister's levée, I have so increased my acquaintance (as they call 'em) since I have resided in town. Like the country mouse that had tasted a little of urbane manners, I long to be nibbling my own cheese by my dear self, without mouse-traps and time-traps. By my new plan I shall be as airy, up four pair of stairs, as in the country, and in a garden in the midst of enchanting (more than Mahomedan paradise) London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest-bowing tradesman, I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter, and the parson into the bargain. O! her lamps of a night! her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardware men, pastry-cooks, St. Paul's Churchyard, the

Strand, Exeter Change, Charing Cross with the man *upon* a black horse! These are thy gods, O London! Ain't you mightily moped on the banks of the Cam? Had you not better come and set up here? You can't think what a difference. All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. At least, I know an alchemy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds."

In a letter to Wordsworth, of somewhat later date, replying to an invitation to visit the Lakes, he dwells on the same passionate love for the great city—the "place of his kindly engendure"—not alone for its sights and sounds, its print-shops, and its bookstalls, but for the human faces, without which the finest scenery failed to satisfy his sense of beauty. "The wonder of these sights," he says, "impels me into night walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider what must I have been doing all my life not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes?"

"What must I have been doing all my life?" This might well be the language of tender retrospect indulged by some man of sixty. It is that of a young man of six-and-twenty. It serves to show us how much of life had been crowded into those few years.

CHAPTER IV

DRAMATIC AUTHORSHIP AND DRAMATIC CRITICISM 1800—1809

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LAMB was now established in his beloved Temple. For nearly nine years he and his sister resided in Mitre Court Buildings, and for about the same period afterwards within the same sacred precincts, in Inner Temple Lane. Of adventure, domestic or other, his biographer has henceforth little to relate. The track is marked on the one hand by his changes of residence and occasional brief excursions into the country, on the other by the books he wrote and the friendships he formed.

He had written to his friend Manning, as we have seen, how his acquaintance had increased of late. Of such acquaintances Manning himself is the most interesting to us, as having drawn from Lamb a series of letters by far the most important of those belonging to the period before us. Manning was a remarkable person, whose acquaintance Lamb had made on one of his visits to Cambridge during the residence at that University of his friend Lloyd. He was mathematical tutor at Caius, and, in addition to his scientific turn, was possessed by an enthusiasm which in later years he was able to turn to very practical purpose, for exploring the remoter parts

of China and Thibet. Lamb had formed a strong admiration for Manning's genius. He told Crabb Robinson in after years that he was the most "wonderful man" he had ever met. Perhaps the circumstance of Manning's two chief interests in life being so remote from his own, drew Lamb to him by a kind of "sympathy of difference." Certainly he made very happy use of the opportunity for friendly banter thus afforded, and the very absence of a responsive humour in his correspondent seems to have imparted an additional richness to his own. Meantime, to add a few guineas to his scanty income, he was turning this gift of humour to what end he could. For at least three years (from 1800 to 1803) he was an occasional contributor of facetious paragraphs, epigrams, and other trifles to the newspapers of the day. "In those days," as he afterwards told the world in one of the Elia essays *(Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago)*, "every morning paper, as an essential retainer to its establishment, kept an author, who was bound to furnish daily a quantum of witty paragraphs. Sixpence a joke, and it was thought pretty high too, was Dan Stuart's settled remuneration in these cases. The chat of the day, scandal, but above all, *dress*, furnished the material. The length of no paragraph was to exceed seven lines. Shorter they might be, but they must be poignant." Dan Stuart was editor of the *Morning Post*, and Lamb contributed to this paper, and also to the *Chronicle* and the *Albion*. Six jokes a day was the

amount he tells us he had to provide during his engagement on the *Post*, and in the essay just cited he dwells with much humour on the misery of rising two hours before breakfast (his days being otherwise fully employed at the India House) to elaborate his jests. "No Egyptian task-master ever devised a slavery like to that, our slavery. Half a dozen jests in a day (bating Sundays too), why, it seems nothing; we make twice the number every day in our lives as a matter of course, and claim no sabbatical exemptions. But then they come into our head. But when the head has to go out to them, when the mountain must go to Mahomet!" A few samples of Lamb's work in this line have been preserved. One political squib has survived, chiefly perhaps as having served to give the *coup de grâce* to a moribund journal, called the *Albion*, which had been only a few weeks before purchased ("on tick doubtless," Lamb says) by that light-hearted spendthrift, John Fenwick, immortalised in another of Lamb's essays *(The Two Races of Men)* as the typical *man who borrows*. The journal had been in daily expectation of being prosecuted, when a (not very scathing) epigram of Lamb's on the apostasy of Sir James Mackintosh, alienated the last of Fenwick's patrons, Lord Stanhope, and the "murky closet," "late Rackstraw's museum" in Fleet Street, knew the editor and his contributors no more. Lamb was not called upon to air his Jacobin principles, survivals from his old association with Cole-

ridge and Southey, any further in the newspaper world. "The *Albion* is dead," he writes to Manning, "dead as nail in door—my revenues have died with it; but I am not as a man without hope." He had got a new introduction, through his old friend George Dyer, to the *Morning Chronicle*, under the editorship of Perry. In 1802 we find him again working for the *Post*, but in a different line. Coleridge was contributing to that paper, and was doing his best to obtain for Lamb employment on it of a more dignified character than providing the daily quantum of jokes. He had proposed to furnish Lamb with prose versions of German poems for the latter to turn into metre. Lamb had at first demurred, on the reasonable ground that Coleridge, whose gift of verse was certainly equal to his own, might as easily do the whole process himself. But the pressure of pecuniary difficulty was great, and a fortnight later he is telling Coleridge that the experiment shall at least be tried. "As to the translations, let me do two or three hundred lines, and then do you try the nostrums upon Stuart in any way you please. If they go down, I will try more. In fact, if I got, or could but get, fifty pounds a year only, in addition to what I have, I should live in affluence." By dint of hard work, much against the grain, he contrived during the year that followed to make double the hoped-for sum; but humour and fancy produced to order could not but fail sooner or later. It came to an end some time in 1803.

"The best and the worst to me," he writes to Manning in this year (Lamb rarely dates a letter), "is that I have given up two guineas a week at the *Post*, and regained my health and spirits, which were upon the wane. I grew sick, and Stuart unsatisfied. *Ludisti satis, tempus abire est.* I must cut closer, that's all."

While writing for the newspapers, he had not allowed worthier ambitions to cool. He was still thinking of success in very different fields. As early as the year 1799 he had submitted to Coleridge and Southey a five-act drama in blank verse, with the title of *Pride's Cure*, afterwards changed to *John Woodvil.* His two friends had urgently dissuaded him from publishing, and though he followed this advice, he had not abandoned the hope of seeing it one day upon the stage, and at Christmas of that year had sent it to John Kemble, then manager of Drury Lane. Nearly a year later, having heard nothing in the meantime from the theatre on the subject, he applied to Kemble to know his fate. The answer was returned that the manuscript was lost, and Lamb had to furnish a second copy. Later, Kemble went so far as to grant the author a personal interview, but the final result was that the play was declined as unsuitable.

That Lamb should ever have dreamed of any other result may well surprise even those who have some experience of the attitude of a young author to his first drama. *John Woodvil* has no quality

that could have made its success on the stage possible. It shows no trace of constructive skill, and the character-drawing is of the crudest. By a strange perverseness of choice Lamb laid the scene of his drama, written in a language for the most part closely imitated from certain Elizabethan models, in the period of the Restoration; and with a strange carelessness introduced side by side with the imagery and rhythm of Fletcher and Massinger a diction often ludicrously incongruous. Perhaps the most striking feature of the play, regarded as a serious effort, is the entire want of keeping in the dialogue. Certain passages have been often quoted, such as that on which Lamb evidently prided himself most, describing the amusements of the exiled baronet and his son in the forest of Sherwood—

> To see the sun to bed, and to arise
> Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes,
> Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him
> With all his fires and travelling glories round him.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> To view the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
> Go eddying round, and small birds, how they fare,
> When mother autumn fills their beaks with corn
> Filched from the careless Amalthea's horn.

They serve to show how closely Lamb's fancy and his ear were attuned to the music of Shakspeare and Shakspeare's contemporaries; but the illusion is

suddenly broken by scraps of dialogue sounding the depths of bathos—

Servant. Gentlemen, the fireworks are ready.

First Gent. What be they?

Lovell. The work of London artists, which our host has provided in honour of this day.

Or by such an image as that with which the play concludes, of the penitent John Woodvil, kneeling on the "hassock" in the "family-pew" of St. Mary Ottery, in the "sweet shire of Devon."

Lamb was not deterred by his failure with the managers from publishing his drama. It appeared in a thin duodecimo in 1802; and when, sixteen years later, he included it in the first collected edition of his writings, dedicated to Coleridge, he was still able to look with a parent's tenderness upon this child of his early fancy. "When I wrote *John Woodvil*," he says, "Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, were then a *first love*, and from what I was so freshly conversant in, what wonder if my language imperceptibly took a tinge?" This expresses in fact the real significance of the achievement. Though it is impossible seriously to weigh the merits of *John Woodvil* as a drama, it is yet of interest as the result of the studies of a young man of fine taste and independent judgment in a field of English literature which had lain long unexplored. Within a few years Charles Lamb was to contribute, by more effective methods, to the revived study of the Elizabethan drama, but in the meantime he was

doing something, even in *John Woodvil*, to overthrow the despotic conventionalities of eighteenth-century "poetic diction," and to reaccustom the ear to the very different harmonies of an older time.

John Woodvil was noticed in the *Edinburgh Review* for April 1803. Lamb might have been at that early date too insignificant, personally, to be worth the powder and shot of Jeffrey and his friends, but he was already known as the associate of Coleridge and Southey, and it was this circumstance—as the concluding words of the review rather unguardedly admit—that marked his little volume for the slaughter. He had been already held up to ridicule in the pages of the *Anti-Jacobin*, as sharing the revolutionary sympathies of Coleridge and Southey. It is certainly curious that Lamb, who never "meddled with politics," home or foreign, any more than the *Anti-Jacobin's* knife-grinder himself, should have his name embalmed in that periodical as a leading champion of French Socialism:—

> Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd and Lamb and Co.,
> Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepeaux.

There was abundant opportunity in Lamb's play for the use of that scourge which the *Edinburgh Review* may be said to have first employed as a critical instrument. Plot and characters, and large portions of the dialogue, lent themselves excellently to the purposes of critical banter, and it was easy to show that Lamb had few qualifications for the

task he had undertaken. As he himself observed in his essay on Hogarth: "It is a secret well known to the professors of the art and mystery of criticism, to insist upon what they do not find in a man's works, and to pass over in silence what they do." It was open to the reviewer to note, as even Lamb's friend Southey noted, the "exquisite silliness of the story," but it did not enter into his plan to detect, as Southey had done, the "exquisite beauty" of much of the poetry. The reason why it is worth while to dwell for a moment on this forgotten review (not, by the way, by Jeffrey, although Lamb's friends seem generally to have attributed it to the editor's own hand) is that it shows how much Lamb was in advance of his reviewer in familiarity with our older literature. The review is a piece of pleasantry, of which it would be absurd to complain, but it is the pleasantry of an ignorant man. The writer affects to regard the play as a specimen of the primeval drama. "We have still among us," he says, "men of the age of Thespis," and declares that "the tragedy of Mr. Lamb may indeed be fairly considered as supplying the first of those lost links which connect the improvements of Æschylus with the commencement of the art." Talfourd expresses wonder that a young critic should "seize on a little eighteenpenny book, simply printed, without any preface: make elaborate merriment of its outline, and, giving no hint of its containing one profound thought or happy expres-

sion, leave the reader of the review at a loss to suggest a motive for noticing such vapid absurdities." But there is really little cause for such wonder. The one feature of importance in the little drama is that it here and there imitates with much skill the imagery and the rhythm of a family of dramatists whom the world had been content entirely to forget for nearly two centuries. There is no reason to suppose that Lamb's reviewer had any acquaintance with these dramatists. The interest of the review consists in the evidence it affords of a general ignorance, even among educated men, which Lamb was to do more than any man of his time to dispel. The passage about the sports in the Forest, which set William Godwin (who met with it somewhere as an extract) searching through Beaumont and Fletcher to find, probably conveyed no idea whatever to the *Edinburgh* Reviewer, save that which he honestly confessed, that here was a specimen of versification which had been long ago improved from off the face of the earth.

In the summer of 1802 Charles and his sister spent their holiday, three weeks, with Coleridge at Keswick. The letters to Coleridge and Manning referring to this visit show pleasantly that there was something of affectation in the disparaging tone with which Charles was wont to speak of the charms of scenery. Though on occasion he would make his friends smile by telling that when he ascended Skiddaw he was obliged, in self-defence,

to revert in memory to the ham-and-beef shop in St. Martin's Lane, it is evident from his enthusiastic words to Manning that the Lake scenery had moved and delighted him. "Coleridge dwells," he writes to Manning, "upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunset which transmuted all the mountains into colours, purple, etc. etc. We thought we had got into Fairyland. But that went off (as it never came again; while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets); and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose that I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, etc., I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an entrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning." And later, "We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before." And again, of Skiddaw, "Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains

all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out like a mountain, I am sure, in my life."

It is pleasant to read of these intervals of bracing air, both to body and mind, in the story of the brother and sister, for the picture of the home life in the Temple lodging at this time, drawn by the same frank hand, is anything but cheerful. This very letter to Manning (who was apparently spending his holiday in Switzerland) goes on to hint of grave anxieties and responsibilities belonging to the life in London. "My habits are changing, I think, *i.e.* from drunk to sober. Whether I shall be happier or not remains to be proved. I shall certainly be more happy in a morning; but whether I shall not sacrifice the fat, and the marrow, and the kidneys—*i.e.* the night, glorious care-drowning night, that heals all our wrongs, pours wine into our mortifications, changes the scene from indifferent and flat to bright and brilliant? O Manning, if I should have formed a diabolical resolution by the time you come to England, of not admitting any spirituous liquors into my house, will you be my guest on such shameworthy terms? Is life, with such limitations, worth trying? The truth is that my liquors bring a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who consume me. This is a pitiful tale to be read at St. Gothard, but it is just now nearest my heart."

The tale is indeed a sad one, and we have no rea-

son to suppose it less true than pitiful. There is no concealment on the part of Lamb himself, or his sister, or of those who knew him most intimately, of the fact that from an early age Charles found in wine, or its equivalents, a stimulus that relieved him under the pressure of shyness, anxiety, and low spirits, and that the habit remained with him till the end of his life. It is not easy to deal with this "frailty" (to borrow Talfourd's expression) in Lamb, without falling into an apologetic tone, suggestive of the much-abused proverb connecting excuse with accusation. But it is the biographer's task to account for these things, if not to excuse them, and at this period there is not wanting evidence of hard trials attending the life of the brother and sister which may well prompt a treatment of the subject the reverse of harsh. There is a correspondence extant of Mary Lamb with Miss Stoddart, afterwards the wife of William Hazlitt, which throws much sad light on the history of the joint home during these years. The pressure of poverty was being keenly felt. "I hope, when I write next," she says, early in 1804, "I shall be able to tell you Charles has begun something which will produce a little money: for it is not well to be *very poor*, which we certainly are at this present writing." Charles's engagement as contributor of squibs and occasional paragraphs to the *Morning Post* had come to an end, just before this letter of Mary's: but poverty was not the worst of the home troubles. It is too clear that both brother and

sister suffered from constant and harassing depression, and that their heroic determination to live entirely for each other only made matters worse. "It has been sad and heavy times with us lately," Mary writes in the year following (1805). "When I am pretty well, his low spirits throw me back again; and when he begins to get a little cheerful, then I do the same kind office for him"; and again, "Do not say anything, when you write, of our low spirits —it will vex Charles. You would laugh, or you would cry, perhaps both, to see us sit together, looking at each other with long and rueful faces, and saying 'How do you do?' and 'How do you do?' and then we fall a crying, and say we will be better on the morrow. He says we are like toothache and his friend gum-boil, which, though a kind of ease, is but an uneasy kind of ease, a comfort of rather an uncomfortable sort." In the following year we gather that Charles, still bent on success in the drama as the most likely means of adding to his income, had begun to write a farce, and finding the gloom here described intolerable, in such an association, had taken a cheap lodging hard by to which he might retire, and pursue his work without distraction. But the more utter solitude proved as intolerable as the depressing influences of home. "The lodging," writes Mary Lamb, "is given up, and *here he is again*— Charles, I mean—as unsettled and as undetermined as ever. When he went to the poor lodging, after the holidays I told you he had taken, he could not

endure the solitariness of them, and I had no rest for the sole of my foot till I promised to believe his solemn protestations that he could and would write as well at home as there."

There is a remark in this same letter, hardly more touching than it is indicative of the clear-sighted wisdom of this true-hearted woman. "Our love for each other," she writes, "has been the torment of our lives hitherto. I am most seriously intending to bend the whole force of my mind to counteract this, and I think I see some prospect of success." It doubtless was this strong affection, working by ill-considered means, that made much of the unhappiness of Charles Lamb's life. His sense of what he owed to his sister, who had been mother and sister in one, his admiration for her character, and his profound pity for her affliction, made him resolve that no other tie, no other taste of pleasure, should interfere with the prime duty of cleaving to her as long as life should last. But this exclusive devotion was not a good thing for either. They wanted some strong human interests from outside to assist them to bear those of home. They were both fond of society. In their later more prosperous days they saw much society of a brilliant and notable sort, but already Charles had made the discovery that "open house" involved temptation of a kind he had not learnt to resist. The little suppers, at home and with friends elsewhere, meant too much punch and too much tobacco, and the inevitable sequel of depres-

sion and moroseness on the morrow. "He came home very *smoky and drinky* last night," is the frequent burden of Miss Lamb's letters. And so it came to pass that his social life was spent too much between these two extremes—the companionship of that one sister, anxiety for whose health was always pressing, and whose inherited instincts were too like his own, and the convivialities which banished melancholy for a while and set his fancy and his speech at liberty, but too often did *not* bear the morning's reflection. He needed at this time fewer companions, but more friends. Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, Manning, were all out of London, and only in his scanty holidays, or on occasion of their rare visits to town, could he take counsel with them.

One pleasant gleam of sunshine among the driving clouds of those years of anxiety is afforded in the lines on Hester Savory. During the three years that Lamb lived at Pentonville (1797–1800), he had fallen in love (for the second and last time) with a young Quakeress.[1] In sending the verses to Manning (in Paris) in 1803, Lamb recalls the old attachment as one his friend would remember having

[1] In a note to my *Letters of Charles Lamb* I have printed some information about this lady, with which Miss Emma Savory, of Blackheath, a niece of Hester, kindly supplied me. "She (Hester) was the eldest sister of my father, A. B. Savory, and lived with him and his sisters, Anna and Martha, at Pentonville. She married Charles Stoke Dudley, and died, eight months after her marriage, of fever."

heard him mention. However ardent it may have been, it was presumably without hope of requital, for Lamb admits that he had never spoken to the lady in his life. He may have met her daily in his walks to and from the office, or have watched her week by week on her way to that Quakers' meeting he has so lovingly described elsewhere. And now, only a month before, she had died, and Lamb's true vein, unspoiled by squibs and paragraphs written to order for party journals, flows once more in its native purity and sweetness:—

When maidens such as Hester die,
Their place ye may not well supply,
Though ye among a thousand try
With vain endeavour.
A month or more hath she been dead,
Yet cannot I by force be led
To think upon the wormy bed
And her together.

A springy motion in her gait,
A rising step, did indicate
Of pride and joy no common rate
That flushed her spirit.
I know not by what name beside
I shall it call: if 'twas not pride,
It was a joy to *that* allied
She did inherit.

Her parents held the Quaker rule
Which doth the human feeling cool:
But she was trained in Nature's school;
Nature had blest her.

A waking eye, a prying mind,
A heart that stirs, is hard to bind:
A hawk's keen sight ye cannot blind,—
Ye could not Hester.

My sprightly neighbour! gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,
Shall we not meet?—as heretofore,
Some summer morning,
When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away;
A sweet forewarning![1]

These charming verses are themselves a "sweet forewarning" of happier times to come. New friends were at hand, and new interests in literature were soon to bring a little cheerful relief to the monotony of the Temple lodging. We have already heard something of a play in preparation. The first intimation of Lamb's resolve to tempt dramatic fortune once again is in a letter to Wordsworth, in September 1805. "I have done nothing," he writes, "since the beginning of last year, when I lost my newspaper job, and having had a long idleness, I must do something, or we shall get very poor. Sometimes I think of a farce, but hitherto all schemes have gone off; an idle brag or two of an evening, vapouring out of a pipe, and going off in the morning; but now I

[1] The copy of this poem, sent to Manning in Lamb's most careful and clerkly writing, is in my possession. I have carefully reproduced Lamb's own punctuation. That of the last stanza is specially worth attention, as making the sense clearer than in the lines as usually printed.

have bid farewell to my 'sweet enemy' tobacco, as you will see in the next page, I shall perhaps set nobly to work. Hang work!" He did set to work, in good heart, during the six months that followed. Mary Lamb's letters contain frequent references to the farce in progress, and before Midsummer 1806 it was completed, and accepted by the proprietors of Drury Lane. The farce was the celebrated *Mr. H——*.

No episode of Lamb's history is better known than the production and the summary failure of this *jeu d'esprit*. That it failed is no matter for surprise, and most certainly none for regret. Though it had the advantage, in its leading character, of the talent of Elliston, the best light-comedian of his day, the slightness of the interest (dealing with the inconveniences befalling a gentleman who is ashamed to confess that his name is Hogsflesh) was too patent for the best acting to contend against. Crabb Robinson, one of Lamb's more recent friends, accompanied the brother and sister to the first and only performance, and received the impression that the audience resented the vulgarity of the name, when it was at last revealed, rather than the flimsiness of the plot. But the latter is quite sufficient to account for what happened. The curtain fell amid a storm of hisses, in which Lamb is said to have taken a conspicuous share. Indeed, his genuine critical faculty must have come to his deliverance when he thus viewed his own work from the position of an

outsider. He expresses no surprise at the result, after the first few utterances of natural disappointment. The mortification must have been considerable. The brother and sister had looked forward to a success. They sorely needed the money it might have brought them, and Charles's deep-seated love of all things dramatic made success in that field a much-cherished hope. But he bore his failure, as he bore all his disappointments in life, with a cheerful sweetness. He writes to Hazlitt: "Mary is a little cut at the ill-success of *Mr. H.*, which came out last night and *failed*. I know you'll be sorry, but never mind. We are determined not to be cast down. I am going to leave off tobacco, and then we must thrive. A smoky man must write smoky farces." It must be admitted that *Mr. H*—— is not much better in reading than it was found in the acting. Its humour, consisting largely of puns and other verbal pleasantries, exhibits little or nothing of Lamb's native vein, and the dialogue is too often laboriously imitated from the conventional comedy-dialogue then in vogue. But even had this been different, the lack of constructive ability already shown in *John Woodvil* must have made success as a writer for the stage quite beyond his reach.

He was on safer ground, though not perhaps working so thoroughly *con amore*, in another literary enterprise of this time. In 1805 he had made the acquaintance of William Hazlitt, and Hazlitt had introduced him to William Godwin. Godwin had

started, as his latest venture, a series of books for children, to which he himself contributed under the name of Edward Baldwin. Lamb, writing to his friend Manning, in May 1806, thus describes a joint task in which he and his sister were engaged in connection with this scheme: "She is doing for Godwin's bookseller twenty of Shakspeare's plays, to be made into children's tales. Six are already done by her, to wit, *The Tempest*, *Winter's Tale*, *Midsummer Night*, *Much Ado*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Cymbeline;* and the *Merchant of Venice* is in forwardness. I have done *Othello* and *Macbeth*, and mean to do all the tragedies. I think it will be popular among the little people, besides money. It's to bring in sixty guineas. Mary has done them capitally, I think you'd think." Mary herself supplements this account in a way that makes curiously vivid to us the homely realities of their joint life. She writes about the same time: "Charles has written *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and has begun *Hamlet*. You would like to see us, as we often sit writing on one table (but not on one cushion sitting), like *Hermia* and *Helena*, in the *Midsummer Night's Dream;* or rather like an old literary Darby and Joan, I taking snuff, and he groaning all the while, and saying he can make nothing of it, which he always says till he has finished, and then he finds out he has made something of it." Writing these *Tales from Shakspeare* was, no doubt, task-work to the brother and sister, but it was task-work on a

congenial theme, and one for which they had special qualifications. They had, to start with, a profound and intimate acquaintance with their original, which set them at an infinite distance from the usual compilers of such books for children. They had, moreover, command of a style, Wordsworthian in its simplicity and purity, that enabled them to write down to the level of a child's understanding, without any appearance of condescension. The very homeliness of the style may easily divert attention from the rare critical faculty, the fine analysis of character, that marks the writers' treatment of the several plays. It is no wonder that the publisher in announcing a subsequent edition was able to boast that a book designed for young children had been found suitable for those of more advanced age. There is, indeed, no better introduction to the study of Shakspeare than these *Tales*—no better initiation into the mind of Shakspeare, and into the subtleties of his language and rhythm. For the ear of both Charles and Mary Lamb had been trained on the cadences of Elizabethan English, and they were able throughout to weave the very words of Shakspeare into their narrative without producing any effect of discrepancy between the old and the new.

The *Tales* were published in January 1807, and were a success, a second edition appearing in the following year. One result of this success was a commission from Godwin to make another version of a great classic for the benefit of children, the story of

the *Odyssey*. Lamb was no Greek scholar, but he had been, like Keats, stirred by the rough vigour of Chapman's translation. "Chapman is divine," he said afterwards to Bernard Barton, "and my abridgment has not quite emptied him of his divinity." And the few words of preface with which he modestly introduced his little book as a supplement to that well-known school classic the *Adventures of Telemachus*, show that the moral value of this record of human vicissitude had moved him not less than the variety of the adventure. "The picture which he exhibits," he writes, "is that of a brave man struggling with adversity; by a wise use of events, and with an inimitable presence of mind under difficulties, forcing out a way for himself through the severest trials to which human life can be exposed; with enemies natural and supernatural surrounding him on all sides. The agents in this tale, besides men and women, are giants, enchanters, sirens; things which denote external force or internal temptations, the twofold danger which a wise fortitude must expect to encounter in its course through this world." We cannot be wrong in judging that Charles Lamb had seen in this "wisdom of the ancients" an image of sirens and enchanters, of trials and disciplines, that beset the lonely dweller at home not less surely than the wanderer from city to city, and had found therein something of a cordial and a tonic for himself. No one felt more repugnance than did Lamb to the appending of a formal moral to a work of art,

to use his own comparison, like the "God send the good ship safe into harbour" at the end of a bill of lading. But it was to be his special note as a critic that he could not keep his human compassion from blending with his judgment of every work of human imagination. If his strength as a critic was—and remains for us—as the "strength of ten," it was because his heart was pure.

To what masterly purpose he had been long training this faculty of criticism he was now about to show. The letter to Manning, which tells of his *Adventures of Ulysses*, announces a more important undertaking—apparently a commission from the firm of Longman—*Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakspeare*. "Specimens," he writes, "are becoming fashionable. We have Specimens of Ancient English Poets, Specimens of Modern English Poets, Specimens of Ancient English Prose Writers, without end. They used to be called 'Beauties.' You have seen *Beauties of Shakspeare?* so have many people that never saw any beauties *in* Shakspeare." But Lamb's method was to have little in common with that of the unfortunate Dr. Dodd. "It is to have notes," is the brief mention of that feature of the collection which was at once to place their author in the first rank of critics. The commentary, often extending to no more than a dozen or twenty lines appended to each scene, or each author chosen for illustration, was of a kind new to a generation accustomed to the *Va-*

riorum school of annotator. It contains no philology, no antiquarianism, no discussion of difficult or corrupt passages. It takes its character from the principle set forth in the Preface on which the selection of scenes is made:—

"The kind of extracts which I have sought after have been, not so much passages of wit and humour —though the old plays are rich in such—as scenes of passion, sometimes of the deepest quality, interesting situations, serious descriptions, that which is more nearly allied to poetry than to wit, and to tragic rather than comic poetry. The plays which I have made choice of have been with few exceptions those which treat of human life and manners, rather than masques and Arcadian Pastorals, with their train of abstractions, unimpassioned deities, passionate mortals, Claius, and Medorus, and Amintas, and Amaryllis. My leading design has been to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors. To show in what manner they felt when they placed themselves by the power of imagination in trying situations, in the conflicts of duty and passion, or the strife of contending duties; what sort of loves and enmities theirs were; how their griefs were tempered, and their full-swoln joys abated; how much of Shakspeare shines in the great men his contemporaries, and how far in his divine mind and manners he surpassed them and all mankind."

The very idea of the collection was a bold one. When we cast our eye over the list of now familiar

names, Marlowe and Peele, Marston, Chapman, Ford, and Webster, from whom Lamb chose his scenes, we must not forget that he was pleading their merits before a public which knew them only as names, if it knew them at all. With the one exception of Shakspeare, the dramatists of the period, between "the middle of Elizabeth's reign and the close of the reign of Charles I.," were unknown to the general reader of the year 1808. Shakspeare, indeed, had a permanent stage-existence—that best of commentaries which fine acting supplies, to which Lamb himself had been from childhood so largely indebted. But for those who studied him in the closet there was no aid to his interpretation save such as was supplied by the very unilluminating notes of Johnson or Malone. And this circumstance must be taken into account if we would rightly estimate the genius of Lamb. As a critic he had no master—it might almost be said, no predecessor. He was the inventor of his own art. As the friend of Coleridge, he might have heard something of that school of dramatic criticism of which Lessing was the founder, but there is little trace of any such influence in Lamb's own critical method. And though, three years later, Coleridge was to make another contribution of value to the same cause, in the Lectures on Shakspeare delivered at the London Philosophical Society, it is likely that his obligations were at least as great to Lamb as those of Lamb had ever been, in the same field, to Coleridge.

The suggestion in the Preface, already cited, of Shakspeare as the representative dramatist, the standard by which his contemporaries must be content to be judged, is amply followed up in the notes, and gives a unity of its own to a collection so miscellaneous. I may refer, as examples, to the masterly distinction drawn between the use made of the supernatural by Middleton in the *Witch* and by Shakspeare in *Macbeth*, and again to the contrast indicated between the Dirge in Webster's *White Devil* and the "Ditty which reminds Ferdinand of his drowned father in the *Tempest*"—"as that is of the water, watery; so is this of the earth, earthy. Both have that intenseness of feeling which seems to resolve itself into the elements which it contemplates,"—a criticism which could only have been conceived by one who was himself a poet. How admirably, again, does he draw attention (in a note on the *Merry Devil of Edmonton*) to that feature of Shakspeare's genius which perhaps more than any other is forced upon the reader's mind as he turns from passage to passage in this collection:—"This scene has much of Shakspeare's manner in the sweetness and good-naturedness of it. It seems written to make the reader happy. Few of our dramatists or novelists have attended enough to this. They torture and wound us abundantly. They are economists only in delight." Nothing, again, can be more profound than his remark on the elaborate and ostentatious saintliness of Ordella (in Fletcher's *Thierry and Theo-*

doret). "Shakspeare had nothing of this contortion in his mind, none of that craving after romantic incidents, and flights of strained and improbable virtue, which I think always betrays an imperfect moral sensibility." And yet though Lamb's fine judgment approved the fidelity to nature, and the artistic self-control, which he here emphasises in his great model, it is clear that the audacious conceptions, both of character and situation, in which writers such as Ford and Tourneur indulged, had no small fascination for him. As he recalled the dreary types of virtue, the "insipid levelling morality to which the modern stage is tied down," he turned with joy—as from a heated saloon into the fresh air—to the "vigorous passions," the "virtues clad in flesh and blood," with which the old dramatists presented him. And this joy in the presentment of the naked human soul is felt throughout all his criticisms on the more terrible scenes of Shakspeare's successors. His "ears tingle," or his eyes fill, or his heart leaps within him, as Calantha dies of her Broken Heart, or Webster's Duchess yields slowly to the torture. Hence it is that Lamb's criticism as often takes the form of a study of human life as of the dramatist's art. And hence also the effect he often leaves of having indulged in praise too great for the occasion. There is, moreover, another reason for this last-named result, which was inseparable from Lamb's method. No two dramatists can be measured by comparing passage with passage, scene with scene. Shakspeare

and Marlowe cannot be compared or contrasted by setting the death of Edward II. side by side with that of Richard II. Drama must be put side by side with drama. Lamb does not indeed suggest, by anything that he says, that the rank of a dramatist can be decided by passages or extracts. Only it did not enter into his scheme to dwell upon that supreme art of construction, and that highest gift of characterisation, which are needed to make the perfect dramatist. In "profoundness of single thoughts," in "richness of imagery," in "abundance of illustration," he could produce passage after passage from Shakspeare's contemporaries that evinced genius nearly allied to Shakspeare's; but of that "fundamental excellence" which "distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, that power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes," it was not possible for him to supply example. And this reservation the student must be prepared to make who would approach the study of the Elizabethan Drama by the aid of Charles Lamb's specimens.

But, whatever qualification must be interposed, it is certain that the publication of these extracts, and the accompanying commentary, has a well-defined place in the poetical renascence that marked the early years of this century. The revived study of the old English dramatists—other than Shakspeare—dates from this publication. Coleridge had not yet begun to lecture, nor Hazlitt to write, and it was not till some twenty years later that Mr. Dyce

began his different, but not less important, labours in the same field. To Lamb must be allowed the credit of having first recalled attention to a range of poetical excellence, in forgetfulness of which English poetry had too long pined and starved. It was to these mountain-heights of inspiration—not to the cultivated lowlands of the eighteenth century—that poetry was to turn her eyes for help.

CHAPTER V

INNER TEMPLE LANE—PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS 1809—1817

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TALFOURD made the acquaintance of Charles Lamb early in the year 1815, and has recorded the impression left by his appearance and manner at that time in words which at this stage of our memoir it may be convenient to quote. Lamb has been fortunate in his verbal portrayers, if not in the attempts of the painter's art to convey a true idea of his outward man. Leigh Hunt has declared that "there never was a true portrait of Lamb"—and those who take the trouble to examine in succession the half-dozen likenesses that are in existence are obliged to admit that it is difficult to derive from them any consistent idea of his features and expression. But it so happens that we have full-length portraits of him drawn by other hands, which more than compensate for this want. Poets, critics, and humorists, of kindred genius, have left on record how Charles Lamb appeared to them; and though the various accounts bear, as might be expected, the strong impress of their writers' individuality, and though each naturally gives most prominence to the traits that struck him most, the final impression left is one of agreement, in remarkable degree. We

have descriptions of Lamb, all possessing points of great interest, by Talfourd, Procter, Hood, Patmore, and others, and from these it is possible to learn how their subject looked and spoke and bore himself, with a precision and vividness that we are seldom in such cases allowed to enjoy. I have the advantage of being able to confirm their accounts by the testimony of a living witness.[1] Mr. James Crossley, of Manchester, has related to me his recollections of more than one interview which he had with Lamb, nearly sixty years ago, and has kindly allowed me to make use of them.

Talfourd's reminiscence, committed to writing shortly after Lamb's death, if slightly idealised by his own poetic temperament, is not for that reason a less satisfactory basis on which to form a conception of Charles Lamb's appearance. "Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of

[1] Mr. Crossley died not long after these words were written.

the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance and even dignity to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance, catch its quivering sweetness, and fix it for ever in words? There are none, alas, to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterised by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning, of Braham, 'a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel.'"

From this tender and charming sketch it is instructive to turn to the rude etching on copper made by Mr. Brook Pulham from life, in the year 1825, which, in the opinion of Lamb's biographers (and Mr. Crossley confirmed their judgment) gives a better idea than all other existing portraits of Charles Lamb's outward man. The small stature—he was very noticeably below the middle height—the head apparently out of proportion to the slender frame, the Jewish cast of nose, the long black hair, the figure dwindling down to "almost immaterial legs," the tight-fitting clerk-like suit of black terminating in gaiters and straps, all these appear in Mr. Pulham's etching in such bold realism that the portrait might easily pass for a caricature, were it not confirmed in all its details by other authorities.

Mr. Crossley recalled with perfect distinctness the aspect of Lamb as he sat at his desk in his room at the India House, looking the more diminutive for being perched upon a very high stool. His hair and complexion were so dark that, when looked at in combination with the complete suit of solemn black, they suggested old Fuller's description of the negro, of which Lamb was so fond—an image "cut in ebony." He might have passed, Hood tells us, for a "Quaker in black." "He had a long melancholy face," says Mr. Procter, "with keen penetrating eyes." "There was altogether," Mr. Patmore says, "a Rabbinical look about Lamb's head which was at once striking and impressive." But the feature of his expression that all his friends dwell on with most loving emphasis is "the bland sweet smile, with the touch of sadness in it"; and Mr. Patmore's description of the general impression produced by this countenance well sums up and confirms the testimony of all other friends: "In point of intellectual character and expression, a finer face was never seen, nor one more fully, however vaguely, corresponding with the mind whose features it interpreted. There was the gravity usually engendered by a life passed in book learning, without the slightest tinge of that assumption and affectation which almost always attend the gravity so engendered; the intensity and elevation of general expression that mark high genius, without any of its pretension and its oddity; the sadness waiting on fruitless thoughts and baffled

aspirations, but no evidence of that spirit of scorning and contempt which these are apt to engender. Above all, there was a pervading sweetness and gentleness which went straight to the heart of every one who looked on it: and not the less so, perhaps, that it bore about it an air, a something, seeming to tell that it was—not *put on*—for nothing would be more unjust than to tax Lamb with assuming anything, even a virtue, which he did not possess—but preserved and persevered in, spite of opposing and contradictory feelings within that struggled in vain for mastery. It was a thing to remind you of that painful smile which bodily disease and agony will sometimes put on, to conceal their sufferings from the observation of those they love."

We know Charles Lamb's history, and have not to ask for any explanation of the appearances thus described. He had always (it must not be forgotten) to contend against sad memories, and anticipation of further sorrow. He was by nature "terribly shy," and his difficulties of speech, and possibly a consciousness of oddity of manner and appearance, aggravated this diffidence. It was "terrible" to him—as he confessed to Mr. Procter one morning when they were going together to breakfast with Rogers—to undergo the scrutiny of servants. Hence only at times, and in certain companies, was he entirely at his ease; and it is evident that when in the society of those in sympathy with him and his tastes, he conveyed an entirely different impression of him-

self from that left under the opposite circumstances. Before strangers, or uncongenial acquaintance, he was uncomfortable, and if not actually silent, generally indulged in some line of conversation or vein of sentiment foreign to his own real nature. Like most men, Charles Lamb had various oddnesses, contradictions, perversenesses of temper, and unless he was in company of those who loved him (and who he *knew* loved him), and understood him, he was very prone, in a spirit of what children call "contrariness," to set to work to alienate them still more from any possibility of sympathy with him. Something of this must of course be laid to the account of the extra glass of wine or spirits that so often determined his mood for the evening, only that when Procter, or Talfourd, or Coleridge, or Hazlitt were round his hospitable table, this stimulus served but to set free the richer and more generous springs of thought and fancy within him. I have the authority of Mr. Crossley for saying that on one evening when in manner, speech, and walk, Lamb was obviously under the influence of what he had drunk, he discoursed at length upon Milton, with a fulness of knowledge, an eloquence, and a profundity of critical power, which left an impression upon Mr. Crossley never to be effaced. But we know that the wine was not in this case the good, any more than on other occasions it was the evil, influence. "It *created* nothing," says Mr. Patmore, "but it was the talisman that not only unlocked

the poor casket in which the rich thoughts of Charles Lamb were shut up, but set in motion that machinery in the absence of which they would have lain like gems in the mountain or gold in the mine." But where the society was unsympathetic, the wine often set free less lovable springs of fancy in Charles Lamb. He would take up a perverse attitude of contradiction, with too slight regard for the courtesies of human intercourse, or else give play to a mere spirit of reckless and not very edifying badinage. The same enthusiastic friend and admirer just quoted is obliged to admit that "to those who did not know him, or knowing, did not and could not appreciate him, Lamb often passed for something between an imbecile, a brute, and a buffoon; and the first impression he made on ordinary people was always unfavourable, sometimes to a violent and repulsive degree." Many persons have of late been startled by the discovery that Lamb sometimes left the same impression upon people the reverse of ordinary. Nothing perhaps in the Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle has provoked so much surprise, and hurt so many feelings, as his passing criticism upon Lamb. And yet it is entirely supported and explained by Mr. Patmore's observation. No two persons could have been more antipathetic than Lamb and Carlyle, and nothing therefore is less surprising than that to the author of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* Charles and his sister should have appeared two very "sorry phenomena," or that the

scraps of Lamb's talk which he overheard during a passing call should often have seemed "contemptibly small," "ghastly make-believe of wit," and the rest. There is no need to question the substantial justice of this report. It is only too probable that the presence of the austere and dyspeptic Scotchman (one of that nation Lamb had all his days been trying in vain to like) made him more than usually disposed to produce his entire stock of frivolity. He had always taken a perverse delight in shocking uncongenial society. Another noticeable person—very different in all respects from Carlyle—has left a record, significant by its very brevity, of an evening in Lamb's company. Macready tells in his diary how he was asked to meet him at Talfourd's, and this is what he records of the interview: "I noted one odd saying of Lamb's, that 'the last breath he drew in he wished might be through a pipe, and exhaled in a pun.'" Lamb may have discovered at a glance that he and the great tragedian were not likely to take the same views of men and things. Perhaps his love both for joking and smoking had struck Macready the reverse of favourably, and if so, it was quite in Lamb's way to clench once for all the unfavourable impression by such an "odd saying" as that just quoted.

Charles Lamb has drawn for us a character of himself, but, so fond was he of hoaxes and mystifications of this kind, that we might have hesitated to accept it as faithful, were it not in such precise

accord with the testimony of others already cited. The second series of the *Essays of Elia* was introduced by a Preface, purporting to be written "by a friend of the late Elia," but of course from Charles's own hand. In this Preface he assumes Elia to have actually died, and after some preliminary remarks on his writings thus proceeds to describe his character and manners:—

"My late friend was in many respects a singular character. Those who did not like him, hated him; and some, who once liked him, afterwards became his bitterest haters. The truth is, he gave himself too little concern what he uttered, and in whose presence. He observed neither time nor place, and would e'en out with what came uppermost. With the severe religionist he would pass for a free-thinker; while the other faction set him down for a bigot, or persuaded themselves that he belied his sentiments. Few understood him, and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure—irony. He sowed doubtful speeches, and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred. He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it. Your long and much talkers hated him. The informal habit of his mind, joined to an inveterate impediment of speech, forbade him to be an orator; and he seemed determined that no one else should play that part when he was present. He was *petit*

and ordinary in his person and appearance. I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent and be suspected for an odd fellow; till some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless, perhaps, if rightly taken) which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him; but nine times out of ten he contrived by this device to send away a whole company his enemies. His conceptions rose kindlier than his utterance, and his happiest *impromptus* had the appearance of effort. He has been accused of trying to be witty, when in truth he was but struggling to give his poor thoughts articulation. He chose his companions for some individuality of character which they manifested. Hence not many persons of science, and few professed *literati*, were of his councils. They were, for the most part, persons of an uncertain fortune; and as to such people commonly nothing is more obnoxious than a gentleman of settled (though moderate) income, he passed with most of them for a great miser. To my knowledge this was a mistake. His *intimados*, to confess a truth, were in the world's eye a ragged regiment. He found them floating on the surface of society; and the colour, or something else, in the weed pleased him. The burrs stuck to him; but they were good and loving burrs for all that. He never greatly cared for the society of what are called good people. If any

of these were scandalised (and offences were sure to arise) he could not help it. When he has been remonstrated with for not making more concessions to the feelings of good people, he would retort by asking what one point did these good people ever concede to him? He was temperate in his meals and diversions, but always kept a little on this side of abstemiousness. Only in the use of the Indian weed he might be thought a little excessive. He took it, he would say, as a solvent of speech. Marry—as the friendly vapour ascended, how his prattle would curl up sometimes with it! the ligaments which tongue-tied him were loosened, and the stammerer proceeded a statist!"

When a man's account of himself—his foibles and eccentricities—is confirmed in minutest detail by those who knew and loved him best, it is reasonable to conclude that we are not far wrong in accepting it, and this self-portraiture of Lamb's gives an unexpected plausibility to the judgments, which otherwise have a harsh sound, of Mr. Patmore and Carlyle. The peculiarities which Lamb here enumerates are just those which are little likely ever to receive gentle consideration from the world.

Lamb's mention of the "senseless pun" which often "stamped his character for the evening," suggests opportunely the subject of his reputation as a humorist and wit. This habit of playing upon words was a part of him through life, and as in the case of most who indulge in it, became an outlet for what-

ever mood was for the moment dominant in Charles Lamb's mind. When he was ill at ease, and in an attitude (as he often was) of antagonism to his company, it would take the shape of a wanton interruption of the argument under discussion. To use a simile of Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, it was the half-penny laid upon the line by a mischievous boy to upset a whole train of cars. When he was annoyed, he made annoying puns,—when he was frivolous, he made frivolous puns; but when he was in the cue, and his surroundings were such as to call forth his better powers, he put into this form of wit, humour and imagination of a high order. Samples of all these kinds have been preserved, and are not without use as showing the various moods of his many-sided nature; but it is pitiable to read long strings of them, set down without any discrimination, and to be asked to accept them as specimens of Lamb's "wit and humour." Many of his jests thus handed down are little more than amusing evidence of a restless levity, and almost petulant impatience of the restraints of serious discourse. Much of his conversational humour took the form of retort—courteous, or the reverse. Sometimes these embodied a criticism so luminous or acute that they have survived, not only for their drollery, or even their severity. "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" asked Coleridge, referring to the days of his Unitarian ministry. "I never heard you do anything else," was the reply. When Wordsworth was dis-

cussing with him the degree of originality to be allowed to Shakspeare, as borrowing his plots from sources ready to his hand, and was even hinting that other poets, with the *History of Hamblet* before them, might have been equally successful in adapting it to the stage, Charles cried out, "Oh! here's Wordsworth says he could have written *Hamlet*, if *he'd had the mind*." In both these cases the retort embodies a felicitous judgment. A foible —if in either case it is to be called a foible—in the character of the two poets, respectively, flashes out into sudden light. The pun is more than a pun; the wit is more than wit; it is a sudden glory of truth kindled by the imagination. Lamb's wide reading and memory give a peculiar flavour to much of his wit. He had a way of applying quotations which is all his own. When Crabb Robinson, then a newfledged barrister, told him of his sensations on getting his first brief in the King's Bench, "I suppose," said Charles, "you said to it, 'Thou great First Cause, least understood.'" Somebody remarking on Shakspeare's anachronisms—clocks and watches in *Julius Cæsar*, oracles of Delphi in the *Winter's Tale*—he said he supposed that was what Dr. Johnson meant when he wrote of him that "panting Time toiled after him in vain." Hood records a visit paid by him to the Lambs when they were living at Islington, with a wasp's nest near their front door. "He was one day bantering my wife on her dread of wasps, when all at once he uttered a terrible shout—

a wounded specimen of the species had slily crawled up the leg of the table, and stung him in the thumb. I told him it was a refutation well put in, like Smollett's timely snowball. 'Yes,' said he, 'and a stinging commentary on Macbeth,—

> By the pricking of my thumbs,
> Something wicked this way comes.'"

Readers of the *Essays of Elia* will recall many happy effects produced by this novel use of familiar quotations. Not that he ever condescended to degrade a really fine passage by any vulgar associations. No great harm was done (in the essay on *Roast Pig*) by calling in his friend's "Epitaph on an Infant" to justify the sacrifice of the innocent suckling, before it should "grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood—

> Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade
> Death came with timely care."

And, now and then, with the true instinct of a poet, he throws a new and lasting halo over a homely object by associating it with one more poetic and dignified, as when in the *Praise of Chimney-Sweepers* he notes the brilliant white of the little climbing-boys' teeth peering from between their sooty lips —"It is," he adds—

> "as when a sable cloud
> Turns forth her silver lining on the night,"

an application of Milton which is only *not* witty (to borrow Sydney Smith's skilful distinction), because the enjoyment of its wit is overpowered by our admiration of its beauty.

"Specimens of wit and humour" afford, under the happiest conditions, but melancholy reading, and none can less well afford to be separated from their context than those of Lamb. And in his case the context is not merely that of the written or spoken matter, but that of the man himself—his look, manner, and habits. To understand how his drollery affected those who were present, and made them anxious to preserve some record of it, it is necessary to keep in mind how he looked and spoke, his odd face, his stammer, and his wilfulness in the presence of uncongenial natures. There is a diverting scene recorded in the diary of Haydon, the painter, which, however amplified by Haydon's facile pen, seems to bring before us "an evening with Charles Lamb" with more reality than the general recollections of Talfourd and Procter. Something of the "diluted insanity" that so shocked Mr. Carlyle is here shadowed forth. Haydon had got up a little dinner, on occasion of Wordsworth being in town (December 1817), and Lamb and Keats were of the party. The account must be given in his own words:—

"On 28th December the immortal dinner came off in my painting-room, with Jerusalem towering up behind us as a background. Wordsworth was in

fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to—on Homer, Shakspeare, Milton, and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry, and exquisitely witty; and his fun, in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory, was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. 'Now,' said Lamb, 'you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. 'Well,' said Lamb, 'here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation—and a very proper one too.'

"He then in a strain of humour beyond description abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture—'a fellow,' said he, 'who believed nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle.' And then he and Keats agreed that he had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow, by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank 'Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics.' It was delightful to see the good humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation, and laughing as heartily as the best of us.

"By this time other friends joined, amongst them poor Ritchie, who was going to penetrate by Fezzan to Timbuctoo. I introduced him to all as 'a gentleman going to Africa.' Lamb seemed to take no notice; but all of a sudden he roared out, 'Which

is the gentleman we are going to lose?' We then drank the victim's health, in which Ritchie joined.

"In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth, and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction. He told me he was a Comptroller of Stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come.

"When we retired to tea we found the Comptroller. In introducing him to Wordsworth I forgot to say who he was. After a little time the Comptroller looked down, looked up, and said to Wordsworth, 'Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?' Keats looked at me, Wordsworth looked at the Comptroller. Lamb, who was dozing by the fire, turned round and said, 'Pray, sir, did you say Milton was a great genius?'—'No, sir; I asked Mr. Wordsworth if he were not.'—'Oh,' said Lamb, 'then you are a silly fellow.'—'Charles! my dear Charles!' said Wordsworth; but Lamb, perfectly innocent of the confusion he had created, was off again by the fire.

"After an awful pause the Comptroller said, 'Don't you think Newton a great genius?' I could not stand it any longer. Keats put his head into my books. Ritchie squeezed in a laugh. Wordsworth seemed asking himself, 'Who is this?' Lamb got up and, taking a candle, said, 'Sir, will you

allow me to look at your phrenological development?' He then turned his back on the poor man, and at every question of the Comptroller he chanted—

'Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John
Went to bed with his breeches on.'

The man in office finding Wordsworth did not know who he was, said in a spasmodic and half-chuckling anticipation of assured victory, 'I have had the honour of some correspondence with you, Mr. Wordsworth.'—'With me, sir?' said Wordsworth, 'not that I remember.'—'Don't you, sir? I am a Comptroller of Stamps.' There was a dead silence; the Comptroller evidently thinking that was enough. While we were waiting for Wordsworth's reply, Lamb sung out—

'Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle.'

'My dear Charles!' said Wordsworth.

'Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John,'

chanted Lamb; and then rising, exclaimed, 'Do let me have another look at that gentleman's organs.' Keats and I hurried Lamb into the painting-room, shut the door, and gave way to inextinguishable laughter. Monkhouse followed, and tried to get Lamb away. We went back, but the Comptroller was irreconcilable. We soothed and smiled, and

asked him to supper. He stayed, though his dignity was sorely affected. However, being a good-natured man, we parted all in good humour, and no ill effects followed.

"All the while, until Monkhouse succeeded, we could hear Lamb struggling in the painting-room and calling at intervals, 'Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more.'"

It is not difficult to guess how Carlyle or Macready would have commented on this scene, had they been present.

But the Wednesday evenings when Charles and Mary Lamb kept open house—if the term could be applied to the slender resources of the garret in Inner Temple Lane—produced something better in the way of intellectual result than the above. Talfourd and Procter have told us the names and qualities of the guests who gathered about the Lambs on these occasions, and the homely fare and the cordial greeting that awaited them—the low, dingy rooms, with books and prints for their chief furniture, the two tables set out for whist, and the cold beef and can of porter on the sideboard, to which each guest helped himself as he chose. On these occasions would be found Wordsworth and Coleridge when in town, and then the company resolved themselves willingly into a band of contented listeners; but at other times no difference of rank would be recognised, and poets and critics, painters, journalists, barristers, men in public offices, dram-

atists, and actors met on terms of unchallenged equality. Hazlitt has made an attempt, in a well-known essay, to reproduce an actual conversation at which he was present on one of these Wednesdays. He admits that, writing twenty years after the event, memory was ill able to recall the actual words of the speakers. But even when allowance is made for the lapse of time, it is hard to believe that Hazlitt had much of the Boswellian faculty. The subject that had been discussed was "Persons one would wish to have seen." Isaac Newton and Locke, Shakspeare and Milton, and many others were suggested, and all dismissed for one reason or another by Lamb. Sir Thomas Browne and Fulke Greville were two he substituted for these. But it is impossible to accept the following sentence as a sample of Lamb's conversational manner. "When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose composition, the *Urn Burial*, I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or, it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it." This style is equally unlike that of essay and letter, and nothing so pointless and so grandiose, we are sure, ever proceeded from his lips. It was not so that Lamb, as Haydon expressed it, "stuttered out his quaintness in snatches, like the Fool in *Lear*." But we can distinguish that stammering tongue, if we listen, above the din of the supper party and the

whist-table—(*not* rigorous as Mrs. Battle's)—ranging from the maddest drollery to the subtlest criticism, calling out to Martin Burney, "Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you 'd have,"—or declaring that he had once known a young man who "wanted to be a tailor, but had n't the spirit,"—or pronouncing, *à propos* of the water-cure, that it was neither new nor wonderful, for that it was at least as old as the Flood, when, "in *his* opinion," it killed more than it cured. We can hear him drawing some sound distinction, as between the ingrained jealousy of Leontes and the mere credulity of Othello, or contrasting the noble simplicity of the *Nut-Brown Maid* with Prior's vapid paraphrase in *Henry and Emma*. We can listen to him as he fearlessly decried all his friends' idols of the hour, Byron or Shelley or Goethe, and raved with something of a perverse enthusiasm over some forgotten worthy of the sixteenth century. We can hear him pleading for the "divine compliments" of Pope, and repeating with a faltering voice the tender lines—

> Happy my studies, when by these approved!
> Happier their author, when by these beloved!
> From these the world will judge of men and books,
> Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes.

It was this range of sympathy, yet coupled with such strange limitations—this alternation of tenderness and frolic—of scholarly fulness and luminous insight, that drew the poet and the critic, as

well as the boon companion, to Lamb's Wednesday nights.

Lamb's letters at this time afford excellent specimens of his drollery and high animal spirits. The following was addressed to Manning early in 1810. Manning was then in China.

DEAR MANNING—When I last wrote you I was in lodgings. I am now in chambers, No. 4 Inner Temple Lane, where I should be happy to see you any evening. Bring any of your friends, the mandarins, with you. I have two sitting-rooms; I call them so *par excellence*, for you may stand, or loll, or lean, or try any posture in them, but they are best for sitting; not squatting down Japanese fashion, but the more decorous mode which European usage has consecrated. I have two of these rooms on the third floor, and five sleeping, cooking, etc., rooms on the fourth floor. In my best room is a choice collection of the works of Hogarth, an English painter of some humour. In my next best are shelves, containing a small but well-chosen library. My best room commands a court in which there are trees and a pump, the water of which is excellent cold, with brandy, and not very insipid without. Here I hope to set up my rest, and not quit till Mr. Powell, the undertaker, gives me notice that I may have possession of my last lodging. He lets lodgings for single gentlemen. I sent you a parcel of books by my last, to give you some idea

of the state of European literature. There comes with this two volumes, done up as letters, of minor poetry, a sequel to *Mrs. Leicester;* the best you may suppose mine; the next best are my coadjutor's; you may amuse yourself in guessing them out; but I must tell you mine are but one-third in quantity of the whole. So much for a very delicate subject. It is hard to speak of one's own self, etc. Holcroft had finished his life when I wrote to you, and Hazlitt has since finished his life: I do not mean his own life, but he has finished a life of Holcroft, which is going to press. Tuthill is Dr. Tuthill; I continue Mr. Lamb. I have published a little book for children on titles of honour; and to give them some idea of the difference of rank and gradual rising I have made a little scale, supposing myself to receive the following various accessions of dignity from the king, who is the fountain of honour. As at first, 1, Mr. C. Lamb; 2, C. Lamb, Esq.; 3, Sir C. Lamb, Bart.; 4, Baron Lamb of Stamford;[1] 5, Viscount Lamb; 6, Earl Lamb; 7, Marquis Lamb; 8, Duke Lamb. It would look like quibbling to carry it on further, and especially as it is not necessary for children to go beyond the ordinary titles of sub-regal dignity in our own country; otherwise, I have sometimes in my dreams imagined myself still advancing—as 9th, King Lamb; 10th, Emperor Lamb; 11th, Pope Innocent, higher than which is nothing.

[1] Where my family came from. I have chosen that, if ever I should have my choice.

Puns I have not made many (nor punch much) since the date of my last; one I cannot help relating. A constable in Salisbury Cathedral was telling me that eight people dined at the top of the spire of the cathedral, upon which I remarked that they must be very sharp set. But in general, I cultivate the reasoning part of my mind more than the imaginative. I am stuffed out so with eating turkey for dinner and another turkey for supper yesterday (Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia), that I can't jog on. It is New Year here. That is, it was New Year half a year back when I was writing this. Nothing puzzles me more than time and space, and yet nothing puzzles me less, for I never think about them. The Persian ambassador is the principal thing talked of now. I sent some people to see him worship the sun on Primrose Hill, at half-past six in the morning, 28th November; but he did not come, which makes me think the old fire-worshippers are a sect almost extinct in Persia. The Persian ambassador's name is Shaw Ali Mirza. The common people call him Shaw nonsense. While I think of it, I have put three letters besides my own three into the India post for you, from your brother, sister, and some gentleman whose name I forget. Will they, have they, did they come safe? The distance you are at cuts up tenses by the root. I think you said you did not know Kate *********. I express her by nine stars, though she is but one. You must have seen her at her father's. Try and remember

her. Coleridge is bringing out a paper in weekly numbers, called the *Friend*, which I would send if I could; but the difficulty I had in getting the packets of books out to you before deters me; and you'll want something new to read when you come home. Except Kate, I have had no vision of excellence this year, and she passed by like the queen on her coronation day; you don't know whether you saw her or not. Kate is fifteen; I go about moping, and sing the old pathetic ballad I used to like in my youth—

> She's sweet fifteen,
> I'm *one year more.*

Mrs. Bland sang it in boy's clothes the first time I heard it. I sometimes think the lower notes in my voice are like Mrs. Bland's. That glorious singer, Braham, one of my lights, is fled. He was for a season. He was a rare composition of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel; yet all these elements mixed up so kindly in him that you could not tell which preponderated; but he is gone, and one Phillips is engaged instead. Kate is vanished, but Miss B—— is always to be met with!

> Queens drop away, while blue-legged Maukin thrives,
> And courtly Mildred dies while country Madge survives.

That is not my poetry, but Quarles's; but have n't you observed that the rarest things are the least obvious? Don't show anybody the names in this letter. I write confidentially, and wish this letter

to be considered as *private.* Hazlitt has written a *grammar* for Godwin; Godwin sells it bound up with a treatise of his own on language, but the *grey mare is the better horse.* I don't allude to Mrs. ——, but to the word grammar, which comes near to *grey mare,* if you observe, in sound. That figure is called paranomasia in Greek. I am sometimes happy in it. An old woman begged of me for charity. "Ah! sir," said she, "I have seen better days."—"So have I, good woman," I replied; but I meant literally, days not so rainy and overcast as that on which she begged; she meant more prosperous days. Mr. Dawe is made Associate of the Royal Academy. By what law of association I can't guess.

The humour of this letter—and there are many as good—is not the humour of the *Essays of Elia.* It is not charged with thought like them, nor does it reach the same depths of feeling. But it is the humour of a man of genius. The inventiveness of it all; the simplicity with which the most daring flights of fancy are hazarded; the amazing improbability of the assertion that it was the "common people" who called the ambassador "Shaw nonsense"; the gravity with which it is set down that it is not necessary *in England* to teach children the degrees of rank beyond royalty,—all this is delightful in the extreme, and the power to enjoy it may be taken as a test of the reader's capacity for understanding Lamb's place as a humorist.

The eight years spent in Inner Temple Lane were, in Talfourd's judgment, the happiest of Lamb's life. His income was steadily rising, and he no longer had to bear the pressure of inconvenient poverty. Friends of a higher order than the "friendly harpies" he has told us of, who came about him for his suppers, and the brandy-and-water afterwards, were gradually gathering round him. Hazlitt, and Crabb Robinson, and Procter, and Talfourd were men of tastes and capacities akin to his own. The period was not a fertile one in literary production. The little collection of stories for children, called *Mrs. Leicester's School*, written jointly with his sister, and the volume of *Poetry for Children*, also a joint production, constitute—with one notable exception—the whole of Lamb's literary labours during this time. The exception named is the contribution to Leigh Hunt's periodical, the *Reflector*, of two or three masterly pieces of criticism, which may be more conveniently noticed later in this memoir.

Meantime the cloud of domestic anxiety was still unlifted. Mary Lamb's illnesses were frequent and embarrassing. An extract from a letter to Miss Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister (October 1815), tells once more the often-told tale, and shows the unaltered patience and seriousness of her brother's faithful guardianship. The passage has a further interest in the picture it incidentally draws of the happier days of the brother and sister:—"I am forced to be the replier to your letter, for Mary has

been ill, and gone from home these five weeks yesterday. She has left me very lonely and very miserable. I stroll about, but there is no rest but at one's own fireside, and there is no rest for me there now. I look forward to the worse half being past, and keep up as well as I can. She has begun to show some favourable symptoms. The return of her disorder has been frightfully soon this time, with scarce a six months' interval. I am almost afraid my worry of spirits about the East India House was partly the cause of her illness, but one always imputes it to the cause next at hand; more probably it comes from some cause we have no control over or conjecture of. It cuts great slices out of the time, the little time, we shall have to live together. I don't know but the recurrence of these illnesses might help me to sustain her death better than if we had no partial separations. But I won't talk of death. I will imagine us immortal, or forget that we are otherwise. By God's blessing, in a few weeks we may be making our meal together, or sitting in the front row of the Pit at Drury Lane, or taking our evening walk past the theatres, to look at the outside of them, at least, if not to be tempted in. Then we forget that we are assailable; we are strong for the time as rocks;—'the wind is tempered to the shorn Lambs.'"

CHAPTER VI

RUSSELL STREET, COVENT GARDEN—THE ESSAYS OF ELIA

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IN the autumn of 1817, Lamb and his sister left the Temple, their home for seventeen years, for lodgings in Great Russell Street, Covent Garden, the corner of Bow Street, and the site where Will's Coffee-House once stood. "Here we are," Lamb writes to Miss Wordsworth in November of this year, "transplanted from our native soil. I thought we never could have been torn up from the Temple. Indeed it was an ugly wrench, but like a tooth, now 't is out, and I am easy. We never can strike root so deep in any other ground. This, where we are, is a light bit of gardener's mould, and if they take us up from it, it will cost no blood and groans, like mandrakes pulled up. We are in the individual spot I like best in all this great city. The theatres with all their noises; Covent Garden, dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinous, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus. Bow Street, where the thieves are examined within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here four-and-twenty hours before she saw a thief. She sits at the window working; and casually throwing out her eyes, she sees a concourse of people coming this way, with a con-

stable to conduct the solemnity. These little incidents agreeably diversify a female life."

During the seventeen years in the Temple, Lamb's worldly fortunes had improved. His salary from the India House was increasing every year, and he was beginning to add to his income by authorship. He was already known as critic and essayist to an appreciative few. Friends were gathering round him, and acquaintances who enjoyed his conversation and his weekly suppers (Wednesday evening was open house in the Temple days) were increasing in rather an embarrassing degree. Ever since he had had a house of his own, he had suffered from the intrusion of such troublesome visitors. A too easy good-nature on his part may have been to blame for this. He took often, as he confesses, a perverse pleasure in noticing and befriending those whom others, with good reason, looked shyly on, and as time went on he began to find very little of his leisure time that he could call his own. It may have been with some hope of beginning a freer life on new soil that he resolved to tear himself from his beloved Temple. If so, he was not successful. A remarkable letter to Mrs. Wordsworth, a few months only after his removal to Russell Street, tells the same old story of well-meaning intruders. "The reason why I cannot write letters at home is that I am never alone." "Except my morning's walk to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am never so. I cannot walk home from office, but some

officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. All the morning I am pestered. Evening company I should always like, had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth) and voices all the golden morning; and five evenings in a week would be as much as I should covet to be in company, but I assure you that it is a wonderful week in which I can get two, or one, to myself. I am never C. L., but always C. L. & Co. He, who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself." "All I mean is that I am a little over-companied, but not that I have any animosity against the good creatures that are so anxious to drive away the harpy solitude from me. I like 'em, and cards, and a cheerful glass; but I mean merely to give you an idea, between office confinement and after-office society, how little time I can call my own." It is not difficult to form an idea from this frank disclosure, of the hindrances and the snares that beset Lamb's comfort and acted harmfully on his temper and habits. It was fortunate for him that at this juncture he should have been led to discover where his powers as a writer indisputably lay, and to find the exact opportunity for their exercise.

In this same year, 1818, a young bookseller, Charles Ollier, whose acquaintance he had recently made, proposed to him to bring out a complete collection of his scattered writings. Some of these, *John Wood-*

vil and *Rosamund Gray*, had been published separately in former years, and were now out of print. Others were interred among extinct magazines and journals, and these were by far the most worthy of preservation. The edition appeared in the year 1818, in two handsome volumes. It contained, besides *John Woodvil* and *Rosamund Gray*, and a fair quantity of verse (including the *Farewell to Tobacco*), the *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, the essay on *The Tragedies of Shakspeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation*, and that on *The Genius and Character of Hogarth*, these two last having originally appeared in Leigh Hunt's magazine, the *Reflector*. The edition was prefaced by a dedicatory letter to Coleridge. "You will smile," wrote Lamb, "to see the slender labours of your friend designated by the title of *Works;* but such was the wish of the gentlemen who have kindly undertaken the trouble of collecting them, and from their judgment there could be no appeal." He goes on pleasantly to recall to his old schoolfellow how, in company with their friend Lloyd, they had so many years before tried their poetical fortune. "You will find your old associate," he adds, "in his second volume, dwindled into prose and *criticism*." Lamb must have felt, as he wrote the word, that "dwindled" was hardly the fitting term. He had written nothing as yet so noble in matter and in style, nothing so worthy to live, as the analysis of the characters of Hamlet and Lear in the essay on *Shak-*

speare's Tragedies. Lamb's high rank, as essayist and critic, must have been put beyond dispute by the publication under his own name of his collected *Works.* He was already well known and appreciated by some of the finest minds of his day. He now addressed a wider public, and the edition of 1818 gave him a status he had not before enjoyed. And yet at this date, various as were the contents of the two volumes, he had not found the opportunity that was to call forth his special faculty.

The opportunity was, however, at hand. In January 1820, Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, the publishers, brought out the first number of a new monthly journal, reviving in it the name of an earlier and extinct periodical, the *London Magazine.* The editor they chose was John Scott, a competent critic and journalist who had formerly edited the *Champion* newspaper. The aim of this new venture, as set forth in the opening prospectus, was to be of a higher and more intellectual class than its many popular contemporaries. It was to be a journal of criticism and the *belles-lettres*, including original poetry, and yet to contain in a monthly appendix such statistics of trade and general home and foreign intelligence as would make it useful to those of a less literary turn. The magazine had an existence of five years, undergoing many changes of fortune, and passing in that time through many hands. Its first editor, Mr. Scott, was killed in a duel in the summer of 1821, and its first publishers parted with it to Tay-

lor and Hessey. At no period of its career does it seem to have been a marked commercial success. Either capital was wanted, or management was unsatisfactory, for the list of contributors during these five years was remarkable. Mr. Procter and Thomas Hood have discoursed pleasantly on their various fellow-contributors to the magazine, and the social gatherings held once a month by Taylor and Hessey (who employed no editor) at the office in Waterloo Place. Hazlitt, Allan Cunningham, Cary (the translator of Dante), John Hamilton Reynolds, George Darley, Keats, James Montgomery, Sir John Bowring, Hartley Coleridge, were regular or occasional contributors. Carlyle published his *Life and Writings of Schiller* in the later volumes, and De Quincey (besides other papers) his *Opium Eater.*

Talfourd thinks that Lamb owed to his intimacy with Hazlitt his introduction to the managers of the *London.* He was not on the staff from the beginning. The first number was issued in January 1820, and Lamb's first contribution was in the August following. In the number for that month appeared an article with the not very attractive title, *Recollections of the South-Sea House.* As to its authorship there was no indication except the signature at the end—"Elia." Lamb has himself told us the origin of this immortal *nom de plume.* When he had written his first essay, wishing to remain anonymous, and yet wanting a convenient mark for identification in articles to come, he bethought him of

an Italian of the name of Elia who had been fellow-clerk with him thirty years before, during the few months that he had been employed as a boy in the South-Sea House. As a practical joke (Lamb confesses) he borrowed his old friend's name, hoping to make his excuses when they should next meet. "I went the other day," writes Lamb to his publisher, Mr. Taylor, in July 1821, "(not having seen him for a year) to laugh over with him at my usurpation of his name, and found him, alas! no more than a name, for he died of consumption eleven months ago, and I knew not of it. So the name has fairly devolved to me, I think, and 't is all he has left me." Lamb continued to use it for his contributions to the *London* and other periodicals for many years. It is doubtful if the name has ever been generally pronounced as Lamb intended. "Call him Ellia," he went on to say, but the world has taken more kindly to the broad *e* and the single *l*.[1]

When the first series of the *Essays of Elia* appeared in a collected form in 1823, it consisted of

[1] See letter to J. Taylor, of July 1821. In this letter Lamb further mentions that his old fellow-clerk, like himself, "added the function of an author to that of a scrivener." I do not know that he has ever been identified on the literary side. There was a certain Felix Ellia who, in the year 1799, published a melodramatic romance, of the then popular type, called "Norman Banditti, or the Fortress of Constance." The book is noticed rather contemptuously in the *Critical Review* for December of the same year. Can this have been Lamb's friend? It would be quite in accordance with Lamb's habits, if, while recalling the pronunciation of the name, he had forgotten the spelling.

some five-and-twenty essays, contributed at the rate of one a month (occasionally two) with scarcely an intermission between August 1820 and December 1822. It would seem as if no conditions had been imposed upon Lamb by the editor as to the subject-matter of his essays. He was allowed to roam at his own free will over the experiences of his life, and to reproduce them in any form, and with any discursiveness into which he might be allured on the way. The matter of the essays proved to be largely personal, or at least to savour of the autobiographical. The first essay already referred to professed to be a recollection of the South-Sea House as it existed thirty years before, with sketches of several of the clerks who had been Lamb's contemporaries. As, however, he was a boy of fifteen at the time he entered, and moreover was at most two years in the office, it is probable that he owed much of the knowledge exhibited in the paper to his elder brother John, who remained in the office long after Charles had left it. Lamb was in the habit of spending his short summer holiday in one or other of the two great University towns, and his second essay was an account of *Oxford in the Vacation*. The third in order of appearance was an account of Christ's Hospital, on that side of it which had *not* been touched in his earlier paper on the same subject. The fourth was a discursive meditation on the *Two Races of Men*, by which Lamb meant those who borrow and those who lend, which he illustrated by

the example of one Ralph Bigod (whom he had known in his journalist days on the *Albion*), and Coleridge, who so freely borrowed from Lamb's library, and so bountifully returned the loan with interest in the shape of marginal annotations. In the essay, *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*, he describes an old lady, a relative of the Plumer family, whom he had known in person, or by repute, at the old mansion in Hertfordshire. In the chapter *On Ears*, his own want of musical ear, and the kind of impressions from musical sounds to which he was susceptible, is the subject of his confidences. In *My Relations* and *Mackery End in Hertfordshire* he draws portraits, under the disguise of two cousins, James and Bridget Elia, of his brother John and his sister Mary. *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple* comprises all that he remembered of his boyhood spent in the Temple, with particulars of the more notable Masters of the Bench of that day, obtained no doubt from his father, the Lovel of the essay, and his father's old and loyal friend Randal Norris, the Sub-Treasurer of the Inner Temple. Other essays, such as that *On Chimney-Sweepers*, and *The Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis*, contain the results of that observing eye with which he had daily surveyed the streets of his beloved city for so many years, "looking no one in the face for more than a moment," as Mr. Procter has told us, yet "contriving to see everything as he went on."

The opening essay on the *South-Sea House* shows

that there was no need to feel his way, either in matter or style. He began in the fulness of his observation, and with a style already formed, and adapting itself to all changes of thought and feeling. His description of John Tipp, the accountant, was enough to show that not only a keen observer, but a master of English was at work:—

"At the desk, Tipp was quite another sort of creature. Thence all ideas that were purely ornamental were banished. You could not speak of anything romantic without rebuke. Politics were excluded. A newspaper was thought too refined and abstracted. The whole duty of man consisted in writing off dividend warrants. The striking of the annual balance in the company's books (which perhaps differed from the balance of last year in the sum of £25 : 1 : 6) occupied his days and nights for a month previous. Not that Tipp was blind to the deadness of *things* (as they call them in the city) in his beloved house, or did not sigh for a return of the old stirring days when South-Sea hopes were young (he was indeed equal to the wielding of any the most intricate accounts of the most flourishing company in these or those days): but to a genuine accountant the difference of proceeds is as nothing. The fractional farthing is as dear to his heart as the thousands which stand before it. He is the true actor who, whether his part be a prince or a peasant, must act it with like intensity. With Tipp, form was everything. His life was formal. His actions seemed ruled with a

ruler. His pen was not less erring than his heart. He made the best executor in the world; he was plagued with incessant executorships accordingly, which excited his spleen and soothed his vanity in equal ratios. He would swear (for Tipp swore) at the little orphans, whose rights he would guard with a tenacity like the grasp of the dying hand that commended their interests to his protection. With all this there was about him a sort of timidity—his few enemies used to give it a worse name—a something which, in reverence to the dead, we will place, if you please, a little on this side of the heroic. Nature certainly had been pleased to endow John Tipp with a sufficient measure of the principle of self-preservation. There is a cowardice which we do not despise, because it has nothing base or treacherous in its elements; it betrays itself, not you; it is mere temperament; the absence of the romantic and the enterprising; it sees a lion in the way, and will not, with Fortinbras, 'greatly find quarrel in a straw,' when some supposed honour is at stake. Tipp never mounted the box of a stage coach in his life, or leaned against the rails of a balcony, or walked upon the ridge of a parapet, or looked down a precipice, or let off a gun, or went upon a water-party, or would willingly let you go if he could have helped it; neither was it recorded of him that for lucre, or for intimidation, he ever forsook friend or principle."

Two of the essays have attained a celebrity, certainly not out of proportion to their merits, but

serving to make quotation from them almost an impertinence. These are the *Dissertation on Roast Pig*, Lamb's version of a story told him by his friend Manning (though *not* probably to be found in any Chinese manuscript), and the essay, finally called *Imperfect Sympathies*, but originally bearing the cumbrous title of *Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and other Imperfect Sympathies*. It is here that occurs the famous analysis of the Scotch character, perhaps the cleverest passage, in its union of fine observation and felicity of phrase, in the whole of Lamb's writings. The anecdote of Lamb's favourite picture—his "beauty"—the Leonardo da Vinci, and that of the party where the son of Burns was expected, together with the complaint that follows of the hopelessness of satisfying a Scotchman in the matter of the appreciation of that poet, have become as much commonplaces of quotation as Sydney Smith's famous reference to the surgical operation. The brilliancy of the whole passage has rather thrown into the shade the disquisition on Quaker manners that follows, and the story he had heard from Carlisle, the surgeon, of the three Quakers who "stopped to bait" at Andover. But the whole paper is excellent.

Hardly less familiar is the account of old Mrs. Battle, and her opinions upon the game of whist. "'A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game.' This was the celebrated wish of old Sarah Battle (now with God), who next to her devotions

loved a good game at whist. She was none of your lukewarm gamesters, your half and half players, who have no objection to take a hand if you want one to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning, that they like to win one game and lose another, that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or no, and will desire an adversary who has slipped a wrong card to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table; one of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing with them."

The portrait must have been drawn in the main from life.[1] One of the most singular suggestions ever offered by Lamb's editors is that this "gentlewoman born," with her "fine last-century countenance," the niece of "old Walter Plumer," was drawn from Lamb's old grandmother, Mrs. Field. As a test of the likelihood of this theory it will be found instructive to read, after this essay, the touching lines already cited called *The Grandame.*

The marked peculiarities of Lamb's style give so unique a colouring to all these essays that one is

[1] Since this passage was first written, I have been told by a near relative of Lamb's friend, John Rickman, and an intimate friend in her youth of the Burney family, that the chief features of Sarah Battle's personality were certainly drawn from Sarah Burney, the wife of the captain. The whole Burney family, as is well known, were devoted to whist. The captain published a little treatise on the game.

apt to overlook to what a variety of themes it is found suitable. There is no mood, from that of almost reckless merriment to that of pathetic sweetness or religious awe, to which the style is not able to modulate with no felt sense of incongruity. A feature of Lamb's method, as we have seen, is his use of quotations. Not only are they brought in so as really to illustrate, but the passages cited themselves receive illustration from the use made of them, and gain a permanent and heightened value from it. Whether it be a garden-scene from Marvell, a solemn paradox from Sir Thomas Browne, or a stanza from some then recent poem of Wordsworth, the quotation fulfils a double purpose, and has sent many a reader to explore for himself in the author whose words strike him with such luminous effect in their new setting. Take, for example, the Miltonic digression in the essay on *Grace before Meat*. Lamb is never more happy than in quoting from or discoursing on Milton:—

"The severest satire upon full tables and surfeits is the banquet which Satan, in the *Paradise Regained*, provides for a temptation in the wilderness:—

> A table richly spread in regal modes
> With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort
> And savour; beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
> In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,
> Gris-amber-steamed; all fish from sea or shore,
> Freshet or purling brook, for which was drained
> Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.

"The Tempter, I warrant you, thought these cates would go down without the recommendatory preface of a benediction. They are like to be short graces where the devil plays the host. I am afraid the poet wants his usual decorum in this place. Was he thinking of the old Roman luxury, or of a gaudy day at Cambridge? This was a temptation fitter for a Heliogabalus. The whole banquet is too civic and culinary; and the accompaniments altogether a profanation of that deep, abstracted, holy scene. The mighty artillery of sauces, which the cook-fiend conjures up, is out of proportion to the simple wants and plain hunger of the guest. He that disturbed him in his dreams, from his dreams might have been taught better. To the temperate fantasies of the famished Son of God, what sort of feasts presented themselves? He dreamed indeed—

> As appetite is wont to dream,
> Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet.

But what meats?

> Him thought he by the brook of Cherith stood,
> And saw the ravens with their horny beaks
> Food to Elijah bringing, even and morn;
> Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought.
> He saw the prophet also how he fled
> Into the desert, and how there he slept
> Under a juniper; then how awaked
> He found his supper on the coals prepared,
> And by the angel was bid rise and eat,
> And ate the second time after repose,

> The strength whereof sufficed him forty days:
> Sometimes, that with Elijah he partook,
> Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.

Nothing in Milton is finelier fancied than these temperate dreams of the divine Hungerer. To which of these two visionary banquets, think you, would the introduction of what is called the grace have been most fitting and pertinent?"

"I am no Quaker at my food." So Lamb characteristically proceeds, after one short paragraph interposed. "I confess I am not indifferent to the kinds of it. Those unctuous morsels of deer's flesh were not made to be received with dispassionate services. I hate a man who swallows it, affecting not to know what he is eating; I suspect his taste in higher matters. I shrink instinctively from one who professes to like minced veal. There is a physiognomical character in the tastes for food. C—— holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple-dumplings. I am not certain but he is right."

And so he rambles on in almost endless digression and absolute fearlessness as to egotism of such a kind ever palling or annoying. This egotism—it is almost superfluous to mark—is a dominant characteristic of Lamb's manner. The prominence of the personal element had indeed been a feature of the essay proper ever since Montaigne, its first inventor. But Lamb's use of the "I" has little resemblance to the gossiping confessions of the Gascon gentleman. These grave avowals as to the minced veal and the

dumplings are not of the same order as Montaigne's confidences as to his preference of white wine to red. The "I" of Lamb in such a case is no concession to an idle curiosity, nor is it in fact biographical at all. Nor is it the egotism of Steele and Addison, though, when occasion arises, Lamb shows signs of the influence upon him of these earlier masters in his own special school. He thus begins, for instance, his paper called *The Wedding:* —"I do not know when I have been better pleased than at being invited last week to be present at the wedding of a friend's daughter. I like to make one at these ceremonies, which to us old people give back our youth in a manner, and restore our gayest season, in the remembrance of our own success, or the regrets, scarcely less tender, of our own youthful disappointments, in this point of a settlement. On these occasions I am sure to be in good-humour for a week or two after, and enjoy a reflected honeymoon." In matter, language, and cadence, this might have been taken bodily from the *Spectator*. Yet this was no freak of imitation on Lamb's part. It merely arose from the subject and the train of thought engendered by it being of that domestic kind which Richard Steele loved so well to discourse on. Lamb's mind and memory were so stored with English reading of an older date, that the occurrence of a particular theme sends him back, quite naturally, to those early masters who had specially made that theme their own. For all his strongly-

marked individuality of manner, there are perhaps few English writers who have written so differently upon different themes. When he chose to be fanciful, he could be as euphuistic as Donne or Burton—when he was led to be grave and didactic, he could write with the sententiousness of Bacon—when his imagination and feeling together lifted him above thoughts of style, his English cleared and soared into regions not far below the noblest flights of Milton and Jeremy Taylor. When, on the other hand, he was at home, on homely themes, he wrote "like a man of this world," and of his own century and year.

Still it must be said that his style is in the main an eclectic English. It is needless to add that this implies no affectation. No man ever wrote to such purpose in a style deliberately assumed. Hazlitt remarks of him, that "he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors, that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress." This is quite true, and Hazlitt might have added that in the rare instances when Lamb used this old-fashioned manner, without the deeper thought or finer observation to elevate it, the manner alone, whimsical and ingenious as it is, becomes a trifle wearisome. The euphuistic ingenuity of *All Fools' Day* is not a pleasing sample of Lamb's faculty.

His friend Bernard Barton wrote of him in a sonnet,

> From the olden time
> Of authorship, thy patent should be dated,
> And thou with Marvell, Browne, and Burton, mated.

This trio of authors is well chosen. There is no poet he loves better to quote than Marvell, and none with whose poetic vein his own is more in sympathy. Lamb received his impressions from nature (unless it was in Hertfordshire) largely through the medium of books, and he makes it clear that old-fashioned garden-scenes come to him first with their peculiar charm when he meets with them in Milton or Marvell. But the second name cited by Barton is the most important of all among the influences on Lamb's style and the cast of his thought. Of all old writers, the author of the *Urn Burial* and the *Religio Medici* appears oftenest, in quotation or allusion, in the *Essays of Elia*. Lamb somewhere boasts that he first "among the moderns" discovered and proclaimed his excellences. And though Lamb never (so far as I can discover) caught the special rhythm of Browne's sentences, it is from him that he adopted the constant habit just referred to, of asserting his opinions, feelings, and speculations in the first person. Different as are the two men in other regards, Lamb's egotism is largely the egotism of Sir Thomas Browne. From Browne too he probably caught a certain habit of gloomy paradox, in dwelling on the mysteries of the supernatural world. His

sombre musings upon death in the essay called *New Year's Eve* bear the strong impress of Browne, notwithstanding that they are antagonistic (perhaps consciously) to a remarkable passage in the *Religio Medici*. And even in his lighter vein of speculation, Lamb's persistent use of the first person often reads as if he were humorously parodying the same original.

A large portion of Lamb's history is related in these essays, and with the addition of a few names and dates, a complete biography might be constructed from them alone. As we have seen, he tells of his childish thoughts and feelings, of his school-days, his home in the Temple, the Hertfordshire village where he passed his holidays as a boy, and the University towns where he loved to spend them in manhood. He has drawn detailed portraits of his grandmother, his father, sister, and brother, and would no doubt have added that of his mother, but for the painful memories it would have brought to Mary. Of the incidents in the happier days of his life, when Mary was in good health, and the daily sharer in all interests and pleasures, he has written with a special charm. There is a passage in the essay called *Old China* without which any picture of their united life would be incomplete. The essay had begun by declaring Lamb's partiality for old china, from which after a few paragraphs he diverges, by a modulation common with him, to the recollection of his past struggles. He had been taking tea, he says, with his

cousin (under this relationship his sister Mary is always indicated), using a new set of china, and remarking to her on their better fortunes which enabled them to indulge now and again in the luxury of such a purchase, "when a passing sentiment seemed to overshade the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

"'I wish the good old times would come again,' she said, 'when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor, but there was a middle state,' so she was pleased to ramble on, 'in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those days!) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

"'Do you remember the brown suit which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare, and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to

the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller, with some grumbling, opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures, and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome, and when you presented it to me, and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating*, you called it), and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that over-worn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen or sixteen shillings, was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio? Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now.'"

The essay *Blakesmoor in H——shire* has been more than once referred to in connection with Lamb's old grandmother, Mrs. Field. The essay acquires a new interest when it is known how much of fact is contained in it. William Plumer, who rep-

resented his county in parliament for so many years, and was at the time of his death in 1822 member for Higham Ferrers, left his estates at Gilston and Blakesware to his widow, apparently with the understanding that the old Blakesware mansion should be pulled down. Accordingly not long before the date of Lamb's essay (September 1824) it had been levelled to the ground, and some of the more valuable of its contents, including the busts of the Twelve Cæsars, so often dwelt on by Lamb in letter or essay, removed to the other house at Gilston. Under its roof, and among its gardens and terraces, Lamb's happiest days as a child had been spent, and he had just been to look once more on the few vestiges still remaining:—

"I do not know a pleasure more affecting than to range at will over the deserted apartments of some fine old family mansion. The traces of extinct grandeur admit of a better passion than envy; and contemplations on the great and good, whom we fancy in succession to have been its inhabitants, weave for us illusions incompatible with the bustle of modern occupancy, and vanities of foolish present aristocracy. The same difference of feeling, I think, attends us between entering an empty and a crowded church. In the latter it is chance but some present human frailty—an act of inattention on the part of some of the auditory, or a trait of affectation, or worse, vain-glory, on that of the preacher—puts us by our best thoughts, disharmonising the place and the oc-

casion. But wouldst thou know the beauty of holiness? Go alone on some week-day, borrowing the keys of good Master Sexton, traverse the cool aisles of some country church; think of the piety that has kneeled there—the congregations, old and young, that have found consolation there—the meek pastor, the docile parishioner. With no disturbing emotions, no cross, conflicting comparisons, drink in the tranquillity of the place, till thou thyself become as fixed and motionless as the marble effigies that kneel and weep around thee.

"Journeying northward lately, I could not resist going some few miles out of my road to look upon the remains of an old great house with which I had been impressed in this way in infancy. I was apprised that the owner of it had lately pulled it down; still I had a vague notion that it could not all have perished, that so much solidity with magnificence could not have been crushed all at once into the mere dust and rubbish which I found it.

"The work of ruin had proceeded with a swift hand indeed, and the demolition of a few weeks had reduced it to an antiquity.

"I was astonished at the indistinction of everything. Where had stood the great gates? What bounded the courtyard? Whereabout did the outhouses commence? A few bricks only lay as representatives of that which was so stately and so spacious.

"Death does not shrink up his human victim at

this rate. The burnt ashes of a man weigh more in their proportion.

"Had I seen these brick and mortar knaves at their process of destruction, at the plucking of every panel I should have felt the varlets at my heart. I should have cried out to them to spare a plank at least out of the cheerful store-room, in whose hot window-seat I used to sit and read Cowley, with the grass-plot before, and the hum and flappings of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me—it is in mine ears now, as oft as summer returns; or a panel of the yellow room.

"Why, every plank and panel of that house for me had magic in it. The tapestried bedrooms—tapestry so much better than painting—not adorning merely—but peopling the wainscots—at which childhood ever and anon would steal a look, shifting its coverlid (replaced as quickly) to exercise its tender courage in a momentary eye-encounter with those stern bright visages, staring reciprocally—all Ovid on the walls—in colours vividder than his descriptions. Actæon in mid sprout, with the unappeasable prudery of Diana; and the still more provoking and almost culinary coolness of Dan Phœbus, eel-fashion, deliberately divesting of Marsyas.

"Then that haunted room—in which old Mrs. Battle died—whereinto I have crept, but always in the daytime, with a passion of fear; and a sneaking curiosity, terror-tainted, to hold communication with the past.—*How shall they build it up again?*

"It was an old deserted place, yet not so long deserted but that traces of the splendour of past inmates were everywhere apparent. Its furniture was still standing, even to the tarnished gilt-leather battledores and crumbling feathers of shuttlecocks in the nursery, which told that children had once played there. But I was a lonely child, and had the range at will of every apartment, knew every nook and corner, wondered and worshipped everywhere. The solitude of childhood is not so much the mother of thought, as it is the feeder of love, and silence, and admiration. So strange a passion for the place possessed me in those years, that though there lay—I shame to say how few roods distant from the mansion—half hid by trees, what I judged some romantic lake, such was the spell which bound me to the house, and such my carefulness not to pass its strict and proper precincts, that the idle waters lay unexplored for me; and not till late in life, curiosity prevailing over elder devotion, I found, to my astonishment, a pretty brawling brook had been the Lacus Incognitus of my infancy. Variegated views, extensive prospects—and those at no great distance from the house—I was told of such—what were they to me, being out of the boundaries of my Eden? So far from a wish to roam, I would have drawn, methought, still closer the fences of my chosen prison; and have been hemmed in by a yet securer cincture of those excluding garden walls. I could have exclaimed with that garden-loving poet—

Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines;
Curl me about, ye gadding vines;
And oh so close your circles lace,
That I may never leave this place:
But lest your fetters prove too weak,
Ere I your silken bondage break,
Do you, O brambles, chain me too,
And, courteous briars, nail me through.[1]

I was here as in a lonely temple. Snug firesides, the low-built roof, parlours ten feet by ten, frugal boards, and all the homeliness of home—these were the condition of my birth—the wholesome soil which I was planted in.

"Yet without impeachment to their tenderest lessons, I am not sorry to have had glances of something beyond; and to have taken, if but a peep, in childhood, at the contrasting accidents of a great fortune."

In this essay, save for the change of Blakesware to Blakesmoor, the experience is related without disguise. But it is not always easy to disengage fact from fiction in these more personal confessions. Lamb had a love of mystifying and putting his readers on a false scent. And the difficulty of getting at the truth is the greater because he is often most outspoken when we should expect him to be reticent, and on the other hand alters names and places when there would seem to be little reason for it. A curious instance of this habit is supplied by the touching reverie called *Dream Children*. This

[1] Marvell on Appleton House, to the Lord Fairfax.

essay appeared in the *London* for January 1822. Lamb's elder brother John was then lately dead. A letter to Wordsworth, of March in this year, mentions his death as recent, and speaks of a certain "deadness to everything," which the writer dated from that event. The "broad, burly, jovial" John Lamb (so Talfourd describes him) had lived his own, easy, prosperous life up to this time, not altogether avoiding social relations with his brother and sister, but evidently absorbed to the last in his own interests and pleasures. The death of this brother, wholly unsympathetic as he was with Charles, served to bring home to him his loneliness. He was left in the world with but one near relation, and that one too often removed from him for months at a time by the saddest of afflictions. No wonder if he became keenly aware of his solitude. No wonder if his thoughts turned to what *might* have been, and he looked back to those boyish days when he wandered in the glades of Blakesware with Alice by his side. He imagines himself with his little ones, who have crept round him to hear stories about their "great-grandmother Field." For no reason that is apparent, while he retains his grandmother's real name, he places the house in Norfolk, but all the details that follow are drawn from Blakesware. "Then I went on to say how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the

charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by its owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in an adjoining county;[1] but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the abbey and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, 'That would be foolish indeed.'"

Inexpressibly touching, when we have once learned to penetrate the thin disguise in which he clothes them, are the hoarded memories, the tender regrets, which Lamb, writing by his "lonely hearth," thus ventured to commit to the uncertain sympathies of the great public. More touching still is the almost superhuman sweetness with which he deals with the character of his lately lost brother. He had named his little ones after this brother, and after their "pretty dead mother"—John and Alice. And there is something of the magic of genius, unless, indeed, it was a burst of uncontrollable anguish, in the revelation with which his dream ends. He kept still,

[1] This is, of course, Gilston, the other seat of the Plumer family.

as always, the secret of his beloved's name. But he tells us who it was that won the prize from him, and it is no secret that in this case the real name is given.

"Then in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grandchildren, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out; and yet he loved the old house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries; and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain; and how in after-life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowance enough for him when he was impatient and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance

there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again to be quarrelling with him (for we quarrelled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him as he their poor uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for Uncle John, and they looked up and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n; and as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness and difficulty and denial meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of representment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost

distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: 'We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartram father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name'—and immediately awaking I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side; but John L. (or James Elia) was gone for ever."

The space available for quotation is exhausted, and many sides of Lamb's peculiar faculty are still unrepresented. Those who have yet to make his acquaintance may be advised to read, in addition to those already named, the essay *On Some of the Old Actors*, containing the analysis of the character of Malvolio, a noble example of the uses which Shakspearian criticism may be made to serve—the extract from a letter to his friend Barron Field, a judge in New South Wales, entitled, *Distant Correspondents*, and that called *The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers*. Belonging to the *personal* group, which includes *Blakesmoor* and *Dream Children*, is the paper *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*, scarcely less delightful. The two critical essays on Sidney and Wither (the latter, however, does not belong to the Elia series) contain some of Lamb's most subtle criticism and most eloquent writing. *Barbara S.* is an anecdote

of Fanny Kelly's early life; and *Captain Jackson* is a character-sketch, which, despite the vast difference between the two writers, curiously suggests the fine hand of Miss Austen. Lastly, the paper with the startling title, *Confessions of a Drunkard*, is not to be overlooked. A strange interest attaches to this paper. It had been originally written by Lamb, at the request of his friend, Basil Montagu, as a contribution to a volume of selections in prose and verse on the temperance question.[1] In this capacity it had been quoted in an article in the *Quarterly*, for April 1822, as "a fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance," which the reviewer went on to say "we have reason to know is a true tale." In order to give the author the opportunity of contradicting this statement, the tract was reprinted in the *London* in the following August, under the signature of Elia. To it were appended a few words of remonstrance with the *Quarterly* reviewer for assuming the literal truthfulness of these confessions, but accompanied with certain significant admissions that showed Lamb had no right to be seriously indignant. "It is indeed," he writes, "a compound extracted out of his long observations of the effects of drinking upon all the world about him; and this accumulated mass of misery he hath centred (as the custom is with judicious essayists) in a single figure. We deny not that a portion of his own experiences

[1] *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Fermented Liquors.* By a Water-Drinker. 1814.

may have passed into the picture (as who, that is not a washy fellow, but must at some time have felt the after-operation of a too generous cup?); but then how heightened! how exaggerated! how little within the sense of the Review, where a part, in their slanderous usage, must be understood to stand for the whole." The truth is that Lamb in writing his paper had been playing with edge-tools, and could hardly have complained if they turned against himself. It would be those who knew Lamb, or at least the circumstances of his life, best, who would be most likely to accept these confessions as true. For in the course of them he gives with curious fidelity the outline of an experience that was certainly not imaginary. The "friendly harpies" who came about him for his gin-and-water, and made its consumption more and more a habit; the exchange of these in due course for companions of a better type, "of intrinsic and felt worth"; the substitution for a while, under the influence of two of these, of the "sweet enemy" tobacco, and the new slavery to this counter-attraction; the increasing need of stimulant to set his wits to work, and the buffoonery indulged under its effects,—all this is told in a way that no friend of Lamb could affect to mistake. No doubt the exaggeration which Lamb pleads is there also, and the drunkard's utter collapse and misery are described in a style which, as applied to himself, was absurd. But to call the insinuation that the tract had in it biographic truth, "malignant," as

some of Lamb's apologists have done, is not less absurd. The essay has enough reality in it to live as a very powerful plea for the virtue of self-restraint, and it may continue to do good service in the cause.

De Quincey has observed that one chief pleasure we derive from Lamb's writing is due to a secret satisfaction in feeling that his admirers must always of necessity be a select few. There is an unpleasantly cynical flavour about the remark, but at the same time one understands to what it points. Thoroughly to understand and enjoy Charles Lamb, one must have come to entertain a feeling towards him almost like personal affection, and such a circle of intimates will always be small. It is necessary to come to the study of his writings in entire trustfulness, and having first cast away all prejudice. The reader must be content to enjoy what is set before him, and not to grumble because any chance incident on the road tempts the writer away from the path on which he set out. If an essay is headed *Oxford in the Vacation*, he must not complain that only half the paper touches on Oxford, and that the rest is divided between the writer Elia and a certain absent-minded old scholar, George Dyer, on whose peculiarities Lamb was never weary of dwelling. What, then, is the compensating charm? What is there in these rambling and multifarious meditations that proves so stimulating and suggestive? There is an epithet commonly applied to Lamb so hackneyed that one shrinks from using it once more

—the epithet "delightful." No other word certainly seems more appropriate, and it is perhaps because (in defiance of etymology) the sound of it suggests that double virtue of illuminating and making happy. It is in vain to attempt to convey an idea of the impression left by Lamb's style. It evades analysis. One might as well seek to account for the perfume of lavender, or the flavour of quince. It is in truth an essence, prepared from flowers and herbs gathered in fields where the ordinary reader does not often range. And the nature of the writer—the alembic in which these various simples were distilled —was as rare for sweetness and purity as the best of those enshrined in the old folios—his "midnight darlings." If he had by nature the delicate grace of Marvell and the quaint fancy of Quarles, he also shared the chivalry of Sidney, and could lay on himself "the lowliest duties," in the spirit of his best-beloved of all, John Milton. It is the man, Charles Lamb, that constitutes the enduring charm of his written words. He is, as I have said, an egotist—but an egotist without a touch of vanity or self-assertion—an egotist without a grain of envy or ill-nature. When asked one day whether he did not hate some person under discussion, he retorted, "How could I hate him? Don't I know him? I never could hate any one I knew." It is this humanity that gives to his intellect its flexibility and its deep vision, that is the feeder at once of his pathos and his humour.

CHAPTER VII

COLEBROOK ROW, ISLINGTON—THE CONTROVERSY WITH SOUTHEY, AND RETIREMENT FROM THE INDIA HOUSE

1823—1826

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COLEBROOK ROW, ISLINGTON—THE CONTROVERSY WITH SOUTHEY, AND RETIREMENT FROM THE INDIA HOUSE

1823—1826

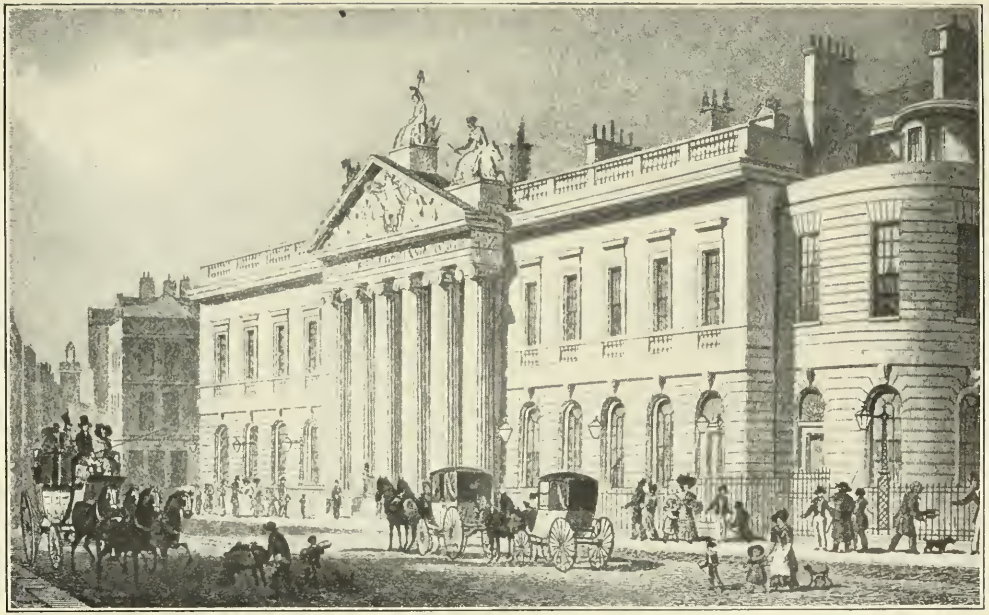
THE last six years of Lamb's life, though the most remarkable in his literary annals, had not been fruitful in incident. The death of his elder brother, already mentioned, was the one event that nearly touched his heart and spirits. Its effect had been, with the loss of some other friends about the same time, to produce, he said, "a certain deadness to everything." It had brought home to him his loneliness, and moreover served to increase a long-felt weariness of the monotony of office life. Already, in the beginning of 1822, he was telling Wordsworth, "I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls, without relief, day after day, all the golden hours of the day between ten and four, without ease or interposition. *Tædet me harum quotidianarum formarum*, these pestilential clerk-faces always in one's dish. . . . I dare not whisper to myself a pension on this side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry—*otium*

cum indignitate. I had thought in a green old age (O green thought!) to have retired to Ponder's End, emblematic name, how beautiful! in the Ware Road, there to have made up my accounts with heaven and the Company, toddling about it between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching, on some fine Isaac Walton morning, to Hoddesden or Amwell, careless as a beggar; but walking, walking ever, till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking! The hope is gone. I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing) with my heart against this thorn of a desk." Very touching, by the side of the delightful suggestion of Ponder's End, is the dream of retirement to the Ware Road—the road, that is to say, that led to Widford and Blakesware. If these were not to him exactly what Auburn was to Goldsmith, he still at times had hopes,—

> His long vexation past,
> There to return, and die at home at last.

Three years were, however, to elapse before he was at liberty to choose his own place of residence. It is significant that though he could never bring himself to live quite beyond reach of town and the "sweet security of streets," it was in the Hertfordshire direction that he turned in his last days, and died as it were half-way between London and that quiet Hertfordshire village, the two places he loved best on earth.

There was one incident in those Russell Street



days that would have been an event indeed in the life of most home-keeping men who had reached middle life without having once left English shores. In the summer holiday of 1822 Charles and his sister made a trip to Paris. James Kenney, the dramatist, who had married a French lady, was living with his family at Versailles, and had invited the Lambs to be his guests. They left England in the middle of June, and two months later we find Mary Lamb still in Paris, and seeing the sights under the direction of their friend, Crabb Robinson. Charles, who had returned earlier to England, had left a characteristic note of instructions for his sister's guidance, advising her to walk along the "Borough side of the Seine," where she would find a mile and a half of print-shops and book-stalls. "Then," he adds, not unfairly describing a first impression of Père-la-Chaise, "there is a place where the Paris people put all their dead people, and bring them flowers and dolls and gingerbread-nuts and sonnets and such trifles; and that is all, I think, worth seeing as sights, except that the streets and shops of Paris are themselves the best sight." In a note to Barron Field on his return, he adds a few more of his experiences, how he had eaten frogs, fricasseed, "the nicest little delicate things," and how the Seine was "exactly the size to run through a magnificent street."

He finds time, however, to add to his hasty note the pleasant intelligence that he had met Talma,

doubtless through Kenney's introduction. Talma had lately given a thousand francs for what he was assured was an authentic portrait of Shakspeare, and he invited Kenney to bring Lamb to see it.[1] "It is painted," Lamb writes, "on the one half of a pair of bellows, a lovely picture, corresponding with the folio head." It is hard to believe that Lamb had any doubts about the spuriousness of this relic, though his language on the point is dubious. He quotes the rhymes "in old carved wooden letters" that surrounded the portrait, and adds the significant remark that Ireland was not found out by his parchments, but by his poetry. And perhaps he did not wish to hurt Talma's feelings. It was arranged that the party should see the tragedian in Regulus the same evening, and that he should sup with them after the performance. Lamb, we are told, "could not at all enter into the spirit of French acting, and in his general distaste made no exception in favour of his intended guest. This, however, did not prevent their mutual and high relish of each other's character and conversation, nor was any allusion made to the performance, till, on rising to go, Talma inquired how he liked it. Lamb shook his head and smiled. 'Ah!' said Talma. 'I was not very happy to-night: you must see me in Sylla.'—'Incidit in Scyllam,' said Lamb, 'qui vult vitare Charybdim.'—

[1] The Shakspeare Portrait imposture is exposed in an article in *Chambers's Journal* of 27th September 1856, "The Apocryphal in Portraiture."

'Ah! you are a rogue; you are a great rogue,' said Talma, shaking him cordially by the hand, as they parted."

There is a sad story, only too likely to be true, that Mary Lamb was seized with one of her old attacks on the journey, and had to be left at Amiens in charge of her attendant. If so, it may account for her brother avoiding the subject in later essays and letters. An Elia essay embodying even the surface impressions of a month's stay in Paris would have been a welcome addition to the number. Lamb was usually prompt to seize on the latest incident in his life and turn it to this purpose. When short-sighted George Dyer, leaving the cottage at Islington, walked straight into the New River in broad daylight, the adventure appears the very next month in the *London Magazine*, under the heading of *Amicus Redivivus*. But France and the French do not seem to have opened any new vein of humour or observation. In truth, Lamb was unused to let his sympathies go forth save in certain customary directions. Any persons, and any book that he had come to know well—any one of the "old familiar faces"—served to draw out those sympathies. But novelties he almost always passed by unmoved.

The first series of Lamb's essays, under the title of *Elia—Essays that have appeared under that signature in the London Magazine*—was published in a single volume by Taylor and Hessey at the opening of the year 1823. It contained the contributions

of something less than two years. As yet there was assuredly no sign of failing power in the brain and heart that produced them. Nor did Lamb cease to contribute to the magazine and elsewhere after the appearance of the first volume. The second series, published ten years later, is an exception to the rule that sequels must necessarily be failures. *Old China* and *Poor Relations,* the *Old Margate Hoy, Blakesmoor, Barbara S.,* and the *Superannuated Man,* which are found in the second series, exhibit all Lamb's qualities at their highest. It was perhaps only a passing word of melancholy that made him write to Bernard Barton, in March 1823, when the book had already begun to make its mark—"They have dragged me again into the magazine, but I feel the spirit of the thing in my own mind quite gone. 'Some brains' (I think Ben Jonson says it) 'will endure but one skimming.'" But another cause for this depression may have been at work. There was a painful incident connected with the *Elia* volume from the first, for which even the quick appreciation of the public could not compensate. There had been one exception to the welcome with which the book had been greeted. A word of grave disapprobation, or what had seemed such to Lamb, had been heard amid the chorus of approval, and this word had been spoken by a dear and valued friend.

In the *Quarterly Review* of January 1823 appeared an article, known to be by Southey, professing to be a review of a work by Gregoire, ex-Bishop

of Blois, on the rise and progress of Deism in France. After the fashion of reviewers, Southey had made the book an occasion for a general survey of the spread of free thought in England as well as abroad, and the article was issued with the alarming title, *Progress of Infidelity*. Towards its close Southey is led characteristically into many general reflections on the reasonableness of belief, and the unreasonableness of scepticism, and while engaged on this line of thought, it seems to have occurred to him that he might at once "point a moral" and call attention to a friend's book, by a quotation from the then newly published volume of Lamb. And this is how he set about it:—

"Unbelievers have not always been honest enough thus to express their real feelings; but this we know concerning them, that when they have renounced their birthright of hope, they have not been able to divest themselves of fear. From the nature of the human mind this might be presumed, and in fact it is so. They may deaden the heart and stupefy the conscience, but they cannot destroy the imaginative faculty. There is a remarkable proof of this in *Elia's Essays*, a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling, to be as delightful as it is original. In that upon *Witches and other Night Fears*, he says 'It is not book or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children. They can at most but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who of all children has been brought up with the

most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear or read of any distressing story, finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own "thick-coming fancies"; and from his little midnight pillow this nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderer are tranquillity.'"

I have had occasion to refer to this essay before, in speaking of Lamb's childhood. For, as usual, it originated in his own experience. He was led to relate how from the age of four to seven his nightly sleep had been disturbed by childish terrors, in which the grim picture of Saul and the Witch, in Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, had borne so prominent a part. And then, in order to strengthen his argument that these terrors are nervous, and not to be traced to any gloomy or improper religious training, he cites the parallel case, within his own knowledge, of "dear little T. H." All Lamb's friends and associates knew that this was little Thornton Hunt, Leigh Hunt's eldest son. The use of initials was really no disguise at all. Lamb admitted in his subsequent remonstrance with Southey that to call him T. H. was "as good as naming him." If the sanctity of private life had been violated, it was certainly Lamb who had set the example. But, as certainly, he had said nothing to the discredit of the

poor child or his parents. According to the ethics of journalism current sixty years ago there was nothing uncommon in this way of indicating living people. Lamb was specially fond of bringing in his friends and acquaintances by their initials. His own family, Coleridge, Norris, Barron Field, and many others, occur repeatedly in his writings in this guise. He was intimate with Leigh Hunt and his young family, and sincerely attached to them. Nothing had been further from his thoughts than to cast any kind of slight upon the little boy, "Thornton Hunt, my favourite child," or his educators. It must therefore have been with something more than disgust that he found the *Quarterly* Reviewer proceeding, after the passage just cited, to point out with unmistakable *animus* that such nervous terrors were easily to be accounted for in the case of one who had been brought up in ignorance of all the facts and consolations of the Christian religion.

It is possible that this gratuitous attack upon a political opponent, through his own child, was not added to the article until after it had left Southey's hands. All that we know from Southey himself is that his sole object in mentioning Lamb's volume had been to call attention to its general merits—that he had in the first instance written "a *saner* religious feeling," which was the word that exactly expressed his meaning; that happily remembering in time the previous history of the Lamb family, he had hastily changed the word to "sounder," mean-

ing to re-cast the sentence when the article returned to him in proof, and that the opportunity never came. We may be sure that this explanation represents the whole truth. Southey had written to his friend Wynn, in the very month in which the article appeared—"Read *Elia*, if the book has not fallen in your way. It is by my old friend, Charles Lamb. There are some things in it which will offend, and some which will pain you, as they do me; but you will find in it a rich vein of pure gold." And the things which pained him were certainly of a kind about which the word *sane* might be more properly used than the word *sound*. Lamb was probably mistaken in thinking that Southey referred to certain familiarities, if not flippancies, of expression on serious subjects that he may at times have indulged in. On this score he had a fair retort ready in the various ballads of *diablerie* that Southey had not disdained to write, and to publish. Nor was Southey, we may be sure, offended by so genuinely earnest a plea for temperance and rational gratitude as is contained in the essay *Grace before Meat*. Rather (as Lamb evidently suspected) was it such a vein of speculation as that followed out in *New Year's Eve*, which would cause a strange chill to the simple faith and steadfast hopefulness of his friend. As I have said, Lamb seems in this essay to have written with the express purpose of presenting the reverse side of a passage in his favourite *Religio Medici*. Sir Thomas Browne had there written—

"I thank God I have not those strait ligaments, or narrow obligations to the world, as to dote on life, or be convulsed and tremble at the name of death." "When I take a full view and circle of myself without this reasonable moderator, and equipoise of justice, death, I do conceive myself the miserablest person extant." Lamb may have argued (in the very words applied to this treatise in the essay on *Imperfect Sympathies*) that it was all very well for the author of the *Religio Medici*, "mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction," to "overlook the impertinent individualities of such poor concretions as mankind," but that to him, Elia, death meant something by no means to be defined as a "reasonable moderator," and "equipoise of justice." He clung to the things he saw and loved—the friends, the books, the streets and crowds around him, and he was not ashamed to confess that death meant for him the absence of all these, and that he could not look it steadfastly in the face.

It is worth noticing that the profound melancholy of this essay had already attracted attention, and formed the subject of a copy of verses, in the form of a *Poetical Epistle to Elia*, signed "Olen," in the *London Magazine* for August 1821.[1] Elia had been there taken to task, in lines of much eloquence and feeling, for his negative views on the subject of

[1] The lines were by the late Sir Charles Elton, of Clevedon Court, Somersetshire, a frequent contributor at the time to the *London Magazine*. They were afterwards included by him in a volume *Boyhood, and other Poems*, published in 1835.

a future life. And indeed, for all the dallying with paradox, and the free blending of fact with fiction, in this singular paper, the fragments of personal confession are very remarkable. There are few things in literature more pathetic than the contrast drawn between the two stages of his own life, as if he would have given the lie sadly to his friend's adage about the child being father of the man:—

"If I know aught of myself, no one whose mind is introspective—and mine is painfully so—can have a less respect for his present identity than I have for the man Elia. I know him to be light, and vain, and humorsome; a notorious . . .; addicted to . . .; averse from counsel, neither taking it nor offering it; . . . besides; a stammering buffoon; what you will; lay it on, and spare not; I subscribe to it all, and much more than thou canst be willing to lay at his door, —but for the child Elia—that 'other me' there in the background—I must take leave to cherish the remembrance of that young master, with as little reference, I protest, to this stupid changeling of five-and-forty as if it had been a child of some other house, and not of my parents. I can cry over its patient small-pox at five, and rougher medicaments. I can lay its poor fevered head upon the sick pillow at Christ's, and wake with it in surprise at the gentle posture of maternal tenderness hanging over it, that unknown had watched its sleep. I know how it shrank from any the least colour of falsehood. God help thee, Elia, how art thou changed! Thou art

sophisticated. I know how honest, how courageous (for a weakling) it was; how religious, how imaginative, how hopeful! From what have I not fallen if the child I remember was indeed myself, and not some dissembling guardian, presenting a false identity, to give the rule to my unpractised steps, and regulate the tone of my moral being."

Although the gloom is relieved by no ray of hope or consolation, the reality of the self-reproach might well have saved the writer from criticism, even as to the "sanity" of his religious feeling.

Lamb was annoyed, rather than deeply hurt, by the attack upon himself. He had old grievances against the *Quarterly Review*. Eight or nine years before, he had written for it a review of Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which Gifford inserted after alterations that Lamb compared to pulling out the eyes and leaving only the bleeding sockets. "I cannot give you an idea of what he (Gifford) has done to it," he wrote to Wordsworth. "The *language* he has altered throughout. Whatever inadequateness it had to its subject, it was, in point of composition, the prettiest piece of prose I ever writ." And it is clear from the article itself, as it appears in the number for October 1814, that this language is not exaggerated. The sweetness and delicate perception of the author are there, but the diction bears little of his peculiar mark. Then had come the unfortunate reference to the *Confessions of a Drunkard*, already mentioned. In general the *Quarterly* set

were in implacable opposition to the Lamb set, and now, not for the first time, he had to hear hard things said, not only of himself, but of those who were bound to him by ties of strong affection. He seems not to have been informed of the attack till some months after its appearance. It is not till the July following, at least, that any mention of it occurs in his letters. In that month he writes to Bernard Barton, "Southey has attacked *Elia* on the score of infidelity, in the *Quarterly* article, *Progress of Infidelity*. He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights, that meant no harm to religion. If all *his* unguarded expressions on the subject were to be collected—but I love and respect Southey, and will not retort. I hate his review and his being a reviewer. The hint he has dropped will knock the sale of the book on the head, which was almost at a stop before." This last apprehension was evidently groundless. There is no reason to suppose that the book made its way more slowly for the paragraph in the review. For whatever here and there is morbid in them, the *Essays* themselves contain the best antidote.

Lamb could not resist the opportunity it afforded him for a fresh essay of Elia, and in the *London* for October 1823 appeared the *Letter of Elia to Robert Southey, Esq.* As a whole, it is not one of Lamb's happiest efforts. His more valid grounds of complaint against the review are set forth with sufficient dignity and force. He urges quite fairly that

to say a book "wants a sounder religious feeling" is to say either too much or too little. And the indecency of attacking Leigh Hunt through his own child, a boy of twelve, is properly rebuked. But when Lamb carries the war into the enemy's territory, he is less successful. As two blacks do not make a white, it was beside the mark to make laborious fun over Southey's youthful ballads; and the grievance as to the fees extorted from visitors to Westminster Abbey comes in rather flatly as a peroration. The concluding paragraphs of the letter are the only portions that Lamb afterwards thought well to reprint. They appeared, ten years later, in the Second Series of *Elia* under the title of *Tombs of the Abbey*. The letter, as a whole, is given in *Mrs. Leicester's School, etc.*

Lamb was not so deeply moved by Southey's criticism but that he could make some sport over his annoyance. What actually galled him was the attack, through himself, upon a friend. In previous articles in the same Review he had found himself complimented at the expense of another friend, William Hazlitt. And now he took the opportunity to vindicate his friendship for both Hunt and Hazlitt in a passage that forms the most interesting and valuable portion of the letter. There had been a coolness, he tells us, between himself and Hazlitt, and it is pleasant to know that Lamb's generosity of tone at this time helped to make the relations between them once more cordial. "Protesting," he

says, "against much that he has written, and some things which he chooses to do; judging him by his conversation which I enjoyed so long, and relished so deeply; or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes, I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire; and I think I shall go to my grave without finding or expecting to find such another companion." Not less manly and noble is the justification of his steady friendship for Leigh Hunt, at that time living abroad, and with a reputation in England of ill savour with those to whom the pages of the *Quarterly* were addressed. "L. H. is now in Italy; on his departure to which land, with much regret, I took my leave of him and of his little family, seven of them, sir, with their mother, and as kind a set of little people (T. H. and all), as affectionate children as ever blessed a parent. Had you seen them, sir, I think you could not have looked upon them as so many little Jonases, but rather as pledges of the vessel's safety, that was to bear such a freight of love. I wish you would read Mr. H.'s lines to that same T. H., 'six years old, during a sickness,'—

> Sleep breathes at last from out thee,
> My little patient boy—

(they are to be found on the 47th page of *Foliage*) —and ask yourself how far they are out of the spirit of Christianity."

As he wrote these words, Lamb may have recalled how his own unfailing sympathy had been a comfort to this friend in those darker days when Leigh Hunt was undergoing his two years' imprisonment in the Surrey jail for his newspaper attack on the Prince Regent. Lamb and his sister were among the Hunts' most regular visitors at that time. "My eldest little boy," writes Hunt in his *Autobiography*, "was my constant companion, and we used to play all sorts of juvenile games together." And it was on watching the child at play among the uncongenial surroundings of prison life that Lamb had written his own lines to "T. L. H.—a child," comforting child and father with the thought that the time of deliverance was at hand, when the boy would be once more in his native element breathing the healthful air and plucking the wild flowers on Hampstead Heath. Lamb was always tender over children, and these lines have a simplicity, over and above their studied quaintness, that savours pleasantly of Blake:—

> Guileless traitor, rebel mild,
> Convict unconscious, culprit-child!
> Gates that close with iron roar
> Have been to thee thy nursery door:
> Chains that chink in cheerless cells
> Have been thy rattles and thy bells:

Walls contrived for giant sin
Have hemmed thy faultless weakness in:
Near thy sinless bed black guilt
Her discordant house hath built,
And filled it with her monstrous brood—
Sights by thee not understood—
Sights of fear, and of distress,
That pass a harmless infant's guess!
But the clouds that overcast
Thy young morning, may not last.
Soon shall arrive the rescuing hour
That yields thee up to Nature's power.
Nature that so late doth greet thee
Shall in o'erflowing measure meet thee.
She shall recompense with cost
For every lesson thou hast lost.
Then wandering up thy sire's loved hill
Thou shalt take thy airy fill
Of health and pastime. *Birds shall sing*
For thy delight each May morning.
'Mid new-yeaned lambkins thou shalt play,
Hardly less a lamb than they.
Then thy prison's lengthened bound
Shall be the horizon skirting round.
And, while thou fill'st thy lap with flowers
To make amends for wintry hours,
The breeze, the sunshine, and the place,
Shall from thy tender brow efface
Each vestige of untimely care
That sour restraint had graven there;
And on thy every look impress
A more excelling childishness.
So shall be thy days beguiled,
Thornton Hunt, my favourite child.

Southey first learned from the pages of the *Lon-*

don Magazine the effects of the language used by him in the *Quarterly Review*. "On my part," he wrote to his publisher, after reading Lamb's epistle, "there was not even a momentary feeling of anger. I was very much surprised and grieved, because I knew how much he would condemn himself, and yet no resentful letter was ever written less offensively; his gentle nature may be seen in it throughout." Southey was in London in the month after the publication of Lamb's remonstrance, and wrote him a letter, in language full of affection and sorrow. The soreness at once passed away. "Dear Southey," he replied, "the kindness of your note has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed *Q. R.* had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the *Confessions of a D——d* was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things that are not ill meant may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead: I am in a public office, and my life is insured. I was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw in a few obnoxious words a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wish both Magazine and Review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time. I will muster up courage to see you, however, any day next week.

We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification. She will hate to see us; but come, and heap embers. We deserve it —I for what I've done, and she for being my sister." The visit was paid, and the old intimacy renewed, never again to be weakened by unkindly word.

In this note to Southey, Lamb has to tell of a change of address. In August of this year, 1823, he and his sister had finally moved from Russell Street, and for the first time in their united lives became householders. The rooms over the brazier's had from the first had many drawbacks, and for some years the brother and sister had occasionally retired to a rural lodging at Dalston, partly to enjoy a short respite from the din of the theatres and the market, but chiefly that Charles might be able to write without interruption from the increasing band of intruders on his scanty leisure. There is a pretty glimpse of one such period of retreat in a note to Miss Hutchinson of April in this year—"Meanwhile of afternoons we pick up primroses at Dalston, and Mary corrects me when I call 'em cowslips." And now they resolved to fix their tents permanently within reach of primroses and cowslips, and Charles must tell the story in his own words. He writes to Bernard Barton:—"When you come Londonward, you will find me no longer in Covent Garden. I have a cottage in Colebrook Row, Islington; a cottage, for it is detached; a white house with

six good rooms; the New River (rather elderly by this time) runs (if a moderate walking pace can be so termed) close to the foot of the house; and behind is a spacious garden with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous. You enter without passage into a cheerful dining-room, all studded over and rough with old books; and above is a lightsome drawing-room, three windows, full of choice prints. I feel like a great lord, never having had a house before." The sequel must be given, so amusingly illustrative of the snares and pitfalls that are inseparable even from rural felicity: —"I am so taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation to me. I have gathered my Jargonels, but my Windsor pears are backward. The former were of exquisite raciness. I do now sit under my own vine and contemplate the growth of vegetable nature. I can now understand in what sense they speak of father Adam. I recognise the paternity while I watch my tulips. I almost fell with him, for the first day I turned a drunken gardener (as he let in the serpent) into my Eden, and he laid about him, lopping off some choice boughs, etc., which hung over from a neighbour's garden, and in his blind zeal laid waste a shade which had sheltered their window from the gaze of passers-by. The old gentlewoman (fury made her not handsome) could scarcely be reconciled by all my fine words. There was no buttering her pars-

nips. She talked of the law. What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy 'garden state'!"

The same letter tells of the fallen fortunes of the *London Magazine*. Lamb was still contributing to its pages, though not so regularly as of old. He speaks of himself as lingering among its creaking rafters, like the last rat, and of many ominous secessions from the ranks of its old supporters. Hazlitt and Procter had forsaken it, and with them one who might well have been spared before, the wretched Wainwright, who had contributed to its pages various flimsy and conceited rhapsodies on art and letters. It is characteristic of Lamb that he always finds some good-natured word to say of this man, such as "kind" or "light-hearted," principally, no doubt, because the others of his set looked on him with some suspicion. It was his way to seek for the redeeming qualities in those the world looked coldly on. He did not live to know the worst of this now notorious hypocrite and scoundrel.

In their autumn holiday of 1823, Charles and Mary Lamb made an acquaintance destined for the next ten years to add a new and most happy interest to their lonely lives. They were still faithful to the University towns in vacation time, and at the house of a friend[1] in Cambridge, where Charles liked to play his evening game at whist, they found

[1] Mrs. Paris, mother of the eminent physician of that name, and sister of Lamb's friend William Ayrton, the musical critic and operatic manager.

a little girl, the orphan daughter of Charles Isola, one of the Esquire Bedells of the University; her grandfather, an Italian refugee, having settled in Cambridge as teacher of his own language. The child, who was at other times at school, spent her holidays with an aunt in Cambridge. The Lambs took a strong fancy to her, invited her to stay with them during her next holidays, and finally adopted her. She called them uncle and aunt, and their house was generally her home, until her marriage with Mr. Moxon, the publisher, in 1833. The education of this young girl became the constant care of the brother and sister. They wished to give her the means of becoming herself a teacher, in the event of her not marrying, and while Charles taught her Latin, Mary Lamb worked hard at French that she might assist her young pupil. Many are the allusions in the letters of the last years to "our Emma"; and as Mary Lamb's periods of mental derangement became more and more frequent and protracted, this new relationship became ever a greater comfort to them both.

In the meantime Charles was fretting under the unbroken confinement of office life. "I have been insuperably dull and lethargic for many weeks," he writes to Bernard Barton early in 1824, "and cannot rise to the vigour of a letter, much less an essay. The *London* must do without me for a time, for I have lost all interest about it." A subsequent letter, in August, tells the same tale of increasing weari-

ness. "The same indisposition to write has stopped my 'Elias,' but you will see a futile effort in the next number, 'wrung from me with slow pain.' The fact is, my head is seldom cool enough. I am dreadfully indolent." The "futile effort" in the next number was no other than the beautiful essay on *Blakesmoor*, fresh proof (if any were needed) that "difficult writing" need not make itself felt as such by the reader. Nothing more unforced in style ever came from Charles Lamb's hand—no sentences more perfect in feeling and expression than those with which it ends:—

"Mine, too—whose else?—the costly fruit-garden, with its sun-baked southern wall; the ampler pleasure-garden, rising backwards from the house in triple terraces, with flower-pots, now of palest lead, save that a speck, here and there, saved from the elements, bespoke their pristine state to have been gilt and glittering; the verdant quarters, backwarder still; and, stretching still beyond, in old formality, the firry wilderness, the haunt of the squirrel and the day-long-murmuring wood-pigeon, with that antique image in the centre, god or goddess I wist not; but child of Athens or old Rome paid never a sincerer worship to Pan or to Sylvanus in their native groves, than I to that fragmental mystery.

"Was it for this, that I kissed my childish hands too fervently in your idol worship, walks and windings of Blakesmoor! for this, or what sin of mine,

has the plough passed over your pleasant places? I sometimes think that as men, when they die, do not die all, so of their extinguished habitations there may be a hope—a germ to be revivified."

The "firry wilderness" still remains, and in the grassy meadow where house and garden once stood may faintly be traced the undulations of the ground where the triple terraces rose backwards; but this is all of the actual Blakesmoor that survives. Yet in this very essay Lamb has fulfilled his own happy vision, and revivified for all time that "extinguished habitation."

In spite of indolence and low spirits, the hand of Lamb had not lost its cunning, as the pretty Album verses written for Bernard Barton's daughter, Lucy, sufficiently testify. They were sent to Barton at the end of this month, September. "I am ill at these numbers," he pleaded, "but if the above be not too mean to have a place in thy daughter's sanctum, take them with pleasure." The lines are interesting, as giving another proof of Lamb's native sympathy with the Quaker simplicity. His Elia essay on the *Quakers' Meeting* has shown it. He had impressed Leigh Hunt, when a boy, by his Quaker-like demeanour. He had conveyed to Hood, we remember, on their first meeting, the idea of a "Quaker in black." He had told Barton in an earlier letter, "In feelings, and matters not dogmatical, I hope I am half a Quaker." And here, taking the word *Album* as text, "little book, surnamed of *White*," he

descants on the themes alone fitted to find shelter in such a home:—

> Whitest thoughts, in whitest dress,
> Candid meanings, best express
> Mind of quiet Quakeress.

In February and March of the following year his letters to Barton—the correspondent who now drew forth his best and most varied powers—show that the desire for rest was becoming irritably strong. "Your gentleman brother sets my mouth watering after liberty. Oh that I were kicked out of Leadenhall with every mark of indignity, and a competence in my fob. The birds of the air would not be so free as I should. How I would prance and curvet it, and pick up cowslips, and ramble about purposeless as an idiot!" Later in March we learn that he had conveyed to the Directors of the East India Company his willingness to resign. "I am sick of hope deferred," he writes. "The grand wheel is in agitation that is to turn up my fortune; but round it rolls, and will turn up nothing. I have a glimpse of freedom, of becoming a gentleman at large, but I am put off from day to day. I have offered my resignation, and it is neither accepted nor rejected. Eight weeks am I kept in this fearful suspense. Guess what an absorbing state I feel it. I am not conscious of the existence of friends, present or absent. The East India Directors alone can be that thing to me, or not. I have just learned that noth-

ing will be decided this week. Why the next? why any week?"

When he wrote these words the gratification of his hopes was nearer than he thought. He can scarcely have had any serious anxiety as to the result of his application. Some weeks before he had received some kind of intimation that the matter might be arranged to his satisfaction, and his medical friends had certified that failing health and spirits made the step at least desirable. But he had served only thirty-three years, and it was not unusual for clerks to complete a term of forty or fifty years' service, so that he may have had some uneasy doubts as to the amount of pension. But all doubts were happily dispelled on the last Tuesday in March 1825, when the Directors sent for him and acquainted him with the resolution they had passed.

Lamb has described this interview in several letters, but nowhere so fully as in the Elia essay, the *Superannuated Man*, which, after his custom, he at once prepared for the next month's *London Magazine*. With the one exception that he transforms the Directors of the India House into a private firm of merchants, and with one or two other slight changes of detail, the account seems to be a faithful version of what actually happened.

"A week passed in this manner, the most anxious one, I verily believe, in my life, when on the evening of the 12th of April, just as I was about quitting my desk to go home (it might be about eight

o'clock) I received an awful summons to attend the presence of the whole assembled firm in the formidable back parlour. I thought, Now my time has surely come; I have done for myself. I am going to be told that they have no longer occasion for me. L——, I could see, smiled at the terror I was in, which was a little relief to me; when to my utter astonishment, B——, the eldest partner, began a formal harangue to me on the length of my services, my very meritorious conduct during the whole of the time (the deuce, thought I, how did he find out that? I protest I never had the confidence to think as much). He went on to descant on the expediency of retiring at a certain time of life (how my heart panted!), and asking me a few questions as to the amount of my own property, of which I have a little, ended with a proposal, to which his three partners nodded a grave assent, that I should accept from the house which I had served so well a pension for life to the amount of two-thirds of my accustomed salary—a magnificent offer! I do not know what I answered between surprise and gratitude, but it was understood that I accepted their proposal, and I was told that I was free from that hour to leave their service. I stammered out a bow, and at just ten minutes after eight I went home—for ever."

The munificence thus recorded was happily no fiction. Lamb's full salary at the time was a little over seven hundred a year, and the offer made to

him was a pension of four hundred and fifty, with a deduction of nine pounds a year to secure a fitting provision for his sister, in the event of her surviving him. "Here am I," he writes to Wordsworth, "after thirty-three years' slavery, sitting in my own room at eleven o'clock, this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with £441 a year for the remainder of my life, live I as long as John Dennis, who outlived his annuity, and starved at ninety."[1]

The East India Directors seem to have been generous and considerate in a marked degree. If they wished to pay some compliment to literature in the person of their distinguished clerk, it was not less to their credit. But in spite of Lamb's modest language as to his official claims upon their kindness, it would seem that he served them steadily and faithfully during those thirty-three years. Save for his brief annual holiday, he stuck to his post. He wrote his letters from the desk in Leadenhall Street, and received some of his callers there, but there is nothing to show that he neglected his daily work. He had sometimes to tell of headache and indispo-

[1] Extract from the Records of the Old India House:—

"At a Court of Directors held on Tuesday, 29th March 1825.

. . . . . .

Resolved that the resignation of Mr. Charles Lamb of the Accountant-General's Office, on account of certified ill-health, be accepted, and, it appearing that he has served the Company faithfully for 33 years, and is now in receipt of an income of £730 per annum, he be allowed a pension of £450 (four hundred and fifty pounds) per annum, under the provisions of the Act of the 53 Geo. 3, cap. 155, to commence from this day."

sition, as when he had been dining with the poets the night before, where they had not "quaffed Hippocrene, but Hippocrass rather." And there is a tradition—not to be too curiously questioned—that on occasion of being reproved for coming to the office late in the mornings, he pleaded that he made up for it by going away very early. But these peccadilloes are as nothing set against the long extent of actual service, and the hearty and spontaneous action of his employers at its close.

Though Lamb had always fretted against what he called his slavery to the "desk's dead wood," the discipline of regular, and even of mechanical work was of infinite service to him. With his special temperament, bodily and mental, he needed, of all men, the compulsion of duty. The "unchartered freedom" and the "weight of chance desires," which his friend Wordsworth has so feelingly lamented, would have been shipwreck to him. When deliverance from the necessity of toil came, he could not altogether resist their baneful effects. And we may be sure that we should not have had more, but fewer *Essays of Elia*, if the daily routine of different labour had been less severe or regular. He was well paid for the best of his literary work, but there was no pressure upon him to write for bread. "Thank God," he writes to Bernard Barton, "you and I are something besides being writers! There is corn in Egypt, while there is cash at Leadenhall!"

CHAPTER VIII

ENFIELD AND EDMONTON

1826—1834

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"I CAME home for EVER on Tuesday in last week," Lamb writes to Wordsworth, on the 6th of April 1825. "The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelmed me. It was like passing from life into eternity. Every year to be as long as three, *i.e.* to have three times as much real time—time that is my own—in it! I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. But that tumultuousness is passing off, and I begin to understand the nature of the gift. Holidays, even the annual month, were always uneasy joys: their conscious fugitiveness; the craving after making the most of them. Now, when all is holiday, there are no holidays. I can sit at home, in rain or shine, without a restless impulse for walkings. I am daily steadying, and shall soon find it as natural to me to be my own master, as it has been irksome to have had a master. Mary wakes every morning with an obscure feeling that some good has happened to us."

Certain misgivings as to the consequences of the step he had taken are apparent here, even in his words of congratulation. They appear elsewhere, as in a letter to Barton of the same month, where he tells how the day before he had gone back and sat

at his old desk among his old companions, and felt qualms at having left them in the lurch. Still, he was forcing himself to take the most hopeful view of the change in his life, and the essay on the *Superannuated Man*, that appeared a month later in the *London*, elaborates with excellent skill the feelings which he wished to cultivate and preserve. "A man can never have too much Time to himself, nor too little to do. Had I a little son, I would christen him Nothing-to-do; he should do nothing. Man, I verily believe, is out of his element as long as he is operative. I am altogether for the life contemplative."

One of the earliest uses that he made of his freedom was to pay visits out of London with Mary. In the summer they are at Enfield, having quiet holidays. "Mary walks her twelve miles a day some days," Charles writes to Southey in August, "and I my twenty on others. 'T is all holiday with me now, you know. The change works admirably." But as time went on, the change was found to be less admirable. The spur and the discipline of regular hours and occupation being taken away, Lamb had to make occupation, or else to find amusement in its stead. He had been always fond of walking, and he now tried the experiment of a companion in his walks in the shape of a dog, Dash, that Hood had given him. But the dog proved unmanageable, and was fond of running away down any other streets than those intended by his master, and Lamb had to part with him a year or two later in despair. He passed

Dash on to Mr. Patmore, and to this change of ownership we owe the amusing letter in which he writes for information as to the dog's welfare. "Dear P., excuse my anxiety, but how is Dash? I should have asked if Mrs. Patmore kept her rules, and was improving: but Dash came uppermost. The order of our thought should be the order of our writing. Goes he muzzled, or *aperto ore?* Are his intellects sound, or does he wander a little in *his* conversation? You cannot be too careful to watch the first symptoms of incoherence. The first illogical snarl he makes—to St. Luke's with him. All the dogs here are going mad, if you can believe the overseers: but I protest, they seem to me very rational and collected. But nothing is so deceitful as mad people, to those who are not used to them. Try him with hot water; if he won't lick it up it is a sign—he does not like it. Does his tail wag horizontally, or perpendicularly? That has decided the fate of many dogs in Enfield. Is his general deportment cheerful? I mean when he is pleased, for otherwise there is no judging. You can't be too careful. Has he bit any of the children yet? If he has, have them shot, and keep *him* for curiosity, to see if it is the hydrophobia"; and so this "excellent fooling" rambles on into still wilder extravagances. "We are dawdling our time away very idly and pleasantly," the letter concludes, "at a Mrs. Leishman's, Chace, Enfield, where if you come a hunting, we can give you cold meat and a tankard."

For two years from the time of his leaving the India

House, the brother and sister paid occasional visits to Mrs. Leishman's lodgings, until, finally, in 1827, they became sole tenants of the little house, furnished.

The year 1827 opened sadly for Charles and Mary Lamb. Since the death of their father, thirty years before, they had not had to mourn the loss of many friends connected with their early life. Their brother John had died five years before—but he had helped to make their real loneliness felt, rather than to relieve it—and they had no other near relations. But there was one dear friend of the family, who had been associated with them in their seasons of heaviest sorrow and hardest struggle. This was Mr. Randal Norris, for many years Sub-Treasurer and Librarian of the Inner Temple, whose name has occurred so often in Lamb's letters and essays. The families of Norris and Lamb were united by more than one bond of friendship. They were neighbours in the Temple for many years, and Mrs. Norris was a native of Widford, and a friend of the old housekeeper at Blakesware. And now Charles writes to Crabb Robinson to tell him that this, his oldest friend, is dying. "In him I have a loss the world cannot make up. He was my friend and my father's friend all the life I can remember. I seem to have made foolish friendships ever since. These are friendships which outlive a second generation. Old as I am waxing, in his eyes I was still the child he first knew me. To the last he called me Charley. I have

none to call me Charley now. He was the last link that bound me to the Temple. You are but of yesterday. In him seem to have died the old plainness of manners and singleness of heart." In a few days the lingering illness was over, and the old friend was laid to rest in the Temple Churchyard.

During the year that followed, Lamb found a congenial occupation, and a healthy substitute for his old regular hours, in working daily at the British Museum. He wished to assist Hone, the editor of the *Every-Day Books*, and undertook to make extracts, on the plan of his former volumes of Dramatic Specimens, from the collection of plays bequeathed by Garrick to the British Museum, for publication in *Hone's Table Book*. "It is a sort of office-work to me," he writes to Barton, "hours, ten to four, the same. It does me good. Man must have regular occupation that has been used to it." The extracts thus chosen were confessedly but gleanings after the earlier volumes, and in the scanty comments prefixed to them there is a corresponding falling-off in interest. Some remarks upon the dramas of Thomas Heywood and Henry Porter, in comparison with Shakspeare, show all the old enthusiasm and keen observation. And it is pleasant to hear him repeat once more that the plays of Shakspeare have been the "strongest and sweetest food of his mind from infancy." But the real impetus to the study of the great Elizabethans had been given in the volumes of 1808.

A series of short essays contributed in this same year to the *New Monthly Magazine*, under the title of *Popular Fallacies*, are for the most part of slight value. The one of these that was the author's favourite is suggested by the saying that "Home is home, though it is never so homely." The first exception that he propounds to the truth of this maxim is in the case of the "very poor." To places of cheap entertainment, and the benches of ale-houses, Lamb says, the poor man "resorts for an image of the home which he cannot find at home." Very touching is the picture he goes on to draw of the discrepancy between the "humble meal shared together," as described by the sentimentalist, and the grim irony of the actual facts. "The innocent prattle of his children takes out the sting of a man's poverty. But the children of the very poor do not prattle. It is none of the least frightful features in that condition that there is no childishness in its dwellings. Poor people, said a sensible nurse to us once, do not bring up their children, they drag them up." The whole passage is in a strain of more sustained earnestness than is usual with Lamb, and serves to show how widely his sympathetic heart had travelled. From this theme he turns to one which touched his own circumstances more nearly. There is yet another home, he says, which gives the lie to the popular saying. It may have all the material comforts that are wanting to the poor man, all its fireside conveniences, and yet be *no home*. "It is the

house of the man that is infested with many visitors." And he goes on to draw the distinction between the noble-hearted friends that are always welcome, and the purposeless droppers-in at meal-time, or just at the moment that you have sat down to a book. "They have a peculiarly compassionating sneer with which they hope that they do not interrupt your studies." It is Charles Lamb himself who is here publishing to the world the old grievance, which appears so constantly in his letters. He was being driven from Islington by the crowd of callers and droppers-in, from whom he professed his inability to escape in any other way. Hardly is he settled at Enfield, in August 1827, when he has to protest that the swarm of gnats follows him from place to place. "Whither can I take wing," he writes to Barton, "from the oppression of human faces? Would I were in a wilderness of apes, tossing cocoa-nuts about, grinning and grinned at!"

There is reason to believe, as already observed, that Lamb was in part responsible for these idle trespassers upon his time. He had not had the courage to keep them off when his days were fully occupied, and his evenings were his only time for literature; and now, when he passed for a man wholly at leisure, it was not likely that the annoyance would diminish. But the truth is, there was an element of irritability in Lamb, due to the family temperament, which the new life, though he could now wander "at his own sweet will," was little cal-

culated to appease. The rest of which he dreamed, when he retired in the prime of life from professional work, could only mean, to such a temperament as Lamb's, restlessness. He looked for relief from many troubles in the mere circumstance of change. It was the *cœlum, non animum* disillusion that so many have had to experience. And at the same time he hated having to break with old associations, and to part from anything to which he had been long accustomed. When he moved to Enfield, in the autumn of 1827, he wrote to Hood that he had had "*no* health" at Islington, and having found benefit from previous visits at Enfield, was going to make his abode there altogether. But, he adds, "'t was with some pain we were evulsed from Colebrook. To change habitations is to die to them; and in my time I have died seven deaths. But I don't know whether such change does not bring with it a rejuvenescence. 'T is an enterprise; and shoves back the sense of death's approximating, which though not terrible to me, is at all times particularly distasteful." The letter ends in a more cheerful vein, with news of ten pounds a year less rent than at Islington, and many anticipations of occasional trips to London "to breathe the fresher air of the metropolis," and of the curds and cream he and Mary would set before Hood and Jerdan and other London friends who might visit them in their country home. Some of these joys were to be realised, and there are many signs of the old humour and fancy

not having been altogether banished by the separation from London interests and friends. Mrs. Shelley meets him in town in August 1828, and writes to Leigh Hunt, "On my return to the Strand, I saw Lamb, who was very entertaining and amiable, though a little deaf. One of the first questions he asked me was, whether they made puns in Italy. I said 'Yes, now Hunt is there.' He said that Burney made a pun in Otaheite, the first that ever was made in that country. At first the natives could not make out what he meant; but all at once they discovered the pun, and danced round him in transports of joy."

Lamb's work in literature was now substantially over, and he did little more than trifle with it, pleasantly and ingeniously, for the last few years. The *London Magazine*, after a long decay, and many changes of management, came to an end in 1826; and though some of Lamb's later contributions to the *New Monthly* and the *Englishman's Magazine* were included in the *Last Essays of Elia*, collected and published in 1833, *Elia* may be said to have been born, and to have died, with the *London Magazine*. In 1828 he wrote, at the request of the wife of Thomas Hood, who had lately lost a child, the well-known lines, *On an infant dying as soon as born*, redolent of the spirit and fancy of Ben Jonson and the later Elizabethans, and though written to order showing no lack of spontaneity. He continued to supply his young lady friends with

acrostics and other such contributions to their albums. He suffered, as he alleged, terrible things from albums at this time. They were another of the taxes he found ruthlessly exacted from "retired leisure." He writes to Procter in 1829:—

"We are in the last ages of the world, when St. Paul prophesied that women should be 'headstrong, lovers of their own wills, having albums.' I fled hither to escape the albumean persecution, and had not been in my new house twenty-four hours when the daughter of the next house came in with a friend's album to beg a contribution, and the following day intimated she had one of her own. Two more have sprung up since. If I take the wings of the morning, and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth, there will albums be. New Holland has albums. But the age is to be complied with."

He so far complied with the age as to produce enough, with a few occasional verses of other kinds, to make a little volume for his friend Moxon, then newly starting as a publisher, to issue in appropriate shape in 1830.

The "new house" spoken of in the letter just quoted was the Enfield house already mentioned; but in the summer of 1829 Charles and Mary Lamb again changed their home. The sister's illnesses were becoming more frequent and more protracted, and the cares of housekeeping weighed too heavily on her. Their old servant, Becky, had married and left them, and they were little contented with her suc-

cessor. There is a gloomy letter of Charles to his constant correspondent Barton, in July of this year, telling how time was *not* lightening the difficulties of a man with no settled occupation. He had been paying a visit in London, but even London was not what it had been.

"The streets, the shops, are left, but all old friends are gone. . . . . When I took leave of our adopted young friend at Charing Cross, 't was heavy, unfeeling rain, and I had nowhere to go. Home have I none, and not a sympathising house to turn to in the great city. Never did the waters of heaven pour down on a forlorner head. . . . . I got home on Thursday, convinced that I was better to get home to my home at Enfield, and hide like a sick cat in my corner. And to make me more alone, our ill-tempered maid is gone, who, with all her airs, was yet a home-piece of furniture, a record of better days; the young thing that has succeeded her is good and attentive, but she is nothing. And I have no one here to talk over old matters with. . . . . What I can do, and do over-do, is to walk; but deadly long are the days, these summer all-day days, with but a half-hour's candle-light and no fire-light. . . . . I pity you for over-work, but I assure you no work is worse. The mind preys on itself—the most unwholesome food. I bragged formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit. With few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. Something will

shine out to take the load off that flags me, which is at present intolerable. I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. I am a sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inch-meal just now. But the snake is vital. Well, I shall write merrier anon."

A letter of a week or two before had given sadder reasons for this depression of spirits. Mary Lamb had again been taken ill, and it had been necessary to remove her from home.

"I have been very desolate indeed. My loneliness is a little abated by our young friend Emma having just come here for her holidays, and a schoolfellow of hers that was with her. Still the house is not the same, though she is the same."

It was these repeated illnesses of his sister, and the loss of their old servant, that made them resolve to give up housekeeping, and take lodgings next door ("Forty-two inches nearer town," Lamb said), with an old couple, a Mr. and Mrs. Westwood, who undertook to board as well as lodge them. "We have both had much illness this year," he wrote to a friend, "and feeling infirmities and fretfulness grow upon us, we have cast off the cares of housekeeping, sold off our goods, and commenced boarding and lodging with a very comfortable old couple next door to where you found us. We use a sort of common table. Nevertheless, we have reserved a private one for an old friend." In less than a week he was able to report the good effect of the change

upon Mary. "She looks two and a half years younger for it. But we have had sore trials."

The next year opens with a letter to Wordsworth describing the new *ménage*, and containing a charming picture of the old couple who now were host and hostess as well as landlords.

"Our providers are an honest pair, Dame Westwood and her husband; he, when the light of prosperity shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher within Bow Bells, retired since with something under a competence; writes himself parcel gentleman; hath borne parish offices; sings fine old sea-songs at threescore and ten; sighs only now and then when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about fifteen, whom he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world; and then checks a sigh with muttering, as I once heard him prettily, not meaning to be heard, 'I have married my daughter, however'; takes the weather as it comes; outsides it to town in severest season; and o' winter nights tells old stories not tending to literature (how comfortable to author-rid folks!), and has *one anecdote*, upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age."

The letter gives encouraging news of his sister's health and spirits, but the loneliness and the want of occupation are pressing heavily, he says, upon himself. He yearns for London and the cheerful streets. "Let no native Londoner imagine that health and rest, innocent occupation, interchange

of converse sweet, and recreative study, can make the country anything better than altogether odious and detestable." Later, in March, his thoughts are diverted from his own condition, by the illness of Emma Isola, then living as governess in the family of Mr. Williams, rector of Fornham, All Saints, in Suffolk; and a proposal from John Murray to continue the *Specimens of the Old Dramatists* is declined, because in his anxiety for their young protégée he could think of nothing else. Miss Isola happily recovered. Lamb fetched her from Fornham, where the illness had occurred, to Enfield, and it was on the journey home that the famous stage-coach incident occurred. "We travelled with one of those troublesome fellow-passengers in a stage-coach, that is called a well-informed man. For twenty miles we discoursed about the properties of steam, probabilities of carriage by ditto, till all my science, and more than all, was exhausted, and I was thinking of escaping my torment by getting up on the outside, when, getting into Bishop Stortford, my gentleman, spying some farming land, put an unlucky question to me: 'What sort of crop of turnips I thought we should have this year?' Emma's eyes turned to me, to know what in the world I could have to say; and she burst into a violent fit of laughter, maugre her pale serious cheeks, when with the greatest gravity I replied that 'It depended, I believed, upon boiled legs of mutton.'"

There is little to record of incident or change in

these last years of the life, now more and more lonely, of brother and sister. A small volume of occasional poetry, *Album Verses*—the amusements of the latter years of leisure—was produced by Mr. Moxon in 1830, but contains little to call for remark; and another venture of Mr. Moxon's, *The Englishman's Magazine*, in the following year, drew from Lamb some prose contributions, under the heading of *Peter's Net*. In 1833 the Lambs made their last change of residence. Their furniture had been disposed of when they settled at Enfield, and they now entered on an arrangement similar to the last, of boarding and lodging with another married pair—younger, however, and more active—a Mr. and Mrs. Walden, of Bay Cottage, in the neighbouring parish of Edmonton. The reasons for the change are of the old sad kind. A letter to Wordsworth, of May 1833, tells the melancholy story:—"Mary is ill again. Her illnesses encroach yearly. The last was three months, followed by two of depression most dreadful. I look back upon her earlier attacks with longing. Nice little durations of six weeks or so, followed by complete restoration, shocking as they were to me then. In short, half her life is dead to me, and the other half is made anxious with fears and lookings-forward to the next shock." Mary Lamb had been on former occasions of illness under the care of the Waldens, and the increasing frequency of her attacks made this change necessary in the interest of both brother and sister.

It secured for Mary the constant supervision of an attendant.

The same letter tells of an additional element of loneliness that was in store for them. Emma Isola was engaged "with my perfect approval and entire concurrence" to Mr. Moxon, the publisher, and the wedding was fixed. Lamb writes of it with the old habitual unselfishness, though it was to leave him without his "only walk-companion, whose mirthful spirits were the 'youth of our house.'" He turns, after his manner, to think of his compensations. He is emancipated from Enfield, with attentive people and younger, and what is more, is three or four miles nearer to his beloved town. Miss Isola was married on the 30th of July, and it is pleasant to know that though up to the very day of the wedding Mary Lamb had been unable to interest herself in the event, and was of course unable to be present at the ceremony, she attributes her recovery from this attack to the stimulus of the good news suddenly communicated. There is a pathetic note of congratulation from her to the newly-married pair, in which she tells them of this with characteristic simplicity. The Waldens had with happy tact proposed Mr. and Mrs. Moxon's health at their quiet meal. "It restored me from that moment," writes Mary Lamb, "as if by an electrical stroke, to the entire possession of my senses. I never felt so calm and quiet after a similar illness as I do now. I feel as if all tears were wiped from my eyes, and all care

from my heart." And Charles is able to add, in a postscript, how they are again happy in their old pursuits—cards, walks, and reading: "never was such a calm, or such a recovery."

In this year, 1833, the later essays of Lamb contributed to the *London Magazine*, together with some shorter pieces from other periodicals, were published by Mr. Moxon under the title of the *Last Essays of Elia*, and with this event the literary life of Lamb was destined to close. Nothing more, beyond an occasional copy of verses for a friend, came from his pen. Notwithstanding the increasing illness of his sister, he was able to enjoy some cheerful society, notably with a friend of recent date, Mr. Cary, the translator of *Dante*, with whom he dined periodically at the British Museum. Mr. John Forster, afterwards to be known widely as the author of the *Life of Goldsmith*, was another accession to his list of congenial friends. But these could not make compensation for the loss of the old. Lamb was not yet sixty years of age, but he was without those ties and relationships which more than all else we know bring "forward-looking thoughts." His life was lived chiefly in the past, and one by one "the old familiar faces" were passing away. In July 1834 Coleridge died, after many months of suffering. For the last eighteen years of his life he had resided beneath Mr. Gillman's roof at Highgate, and Charles and Mary Lamb were among the most welcome visitors at the house: and now the friendship of fifty years

was at an end. All the little asperities of early rivalry; all the natural regrets at sight of a life so wasted—powers so vast ending in performance so inadequate—a spirit so willing, and a will so weak —were forgotten now. Lamb had never spared the foibles of his old companion; when Coleridge had soared to his highest metaphysical flights he had apologised for him—"Yes! you know Coleridge is *so* full of his fun";—he had described him as an "archangel, a little damaged";—but the indescribable moral afflatus felt through Coleridge's obscurest rhapsodies had been among the best influences on Charles Lamb's life. A few months later he tried to put his regrets and his obligations into words. "When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me that he had long been on the confines of the next world—that he had a hunger for eternity. I grieved then that I could not grieve; but since, I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations."

The death of his friend was Charles Lamb's deathblow. There had been two persons in the world for whom he would have wished to live—Coleridge and his sister Mary. The latter was now for the greater part of each year worse than dead to him. The former was gone, and the blank left him helplessly

alone. In conversation with friends he would suddenly exclaim, as if with surprise that aught else in the world should interest him, "Coleridge is dead!" And within five weeks of the day when the affecting tribute just cited was committed to paper, he was called to join his friend. One day in the middle of December, as he was taking his usual walk along the London Road, his foot struck against a stone, and he stumbled and fell, inflicting a slight wound on his face. For some days the injury appeared trifling, and on the 22nd of the month he writes a cheerful note to the wife of his old friend George Dyer, concerning the safety of a certain book belonging to Mr. Cary, which he had left at her house. On the same day, however, symptoms of erysipelas supervened, and it soon became evident that his general health was too feeble to resist the attack. From the first appearance of the disease the failure of life was so rapid that his intimate friends, Talfourd and Crabb Robinson, did not reach his bedside in time for him to recognise them. The few words that escaped his lips while his mind was still unclouded, conveyed to those who watched him that he was undisturbed at the prospect of death. His sister was, happily for herself, in no state to feel or appreciate the blow that was falling. On the 27th of December, murmuring in his last moments the names of his dearest friends, he passed tranquilly out of life. "On the following Saturday his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton church-

yard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried."

There is a touching fitness in the circumstance that Charles Lamb could not longer survive his earliest and dearest friend—that, trying it for a little while, "he liked it not—and died." It was a fitting comment on the circumstance, that that other great poet and thinker who next to Coleridge shared Lamb's deepest pride and affection, as he looked back a year afterwards on the gaps that death had made in the ranks of those he loved, should have once more linked their names in imperishable verse:—

> Nor has the rolling year twice measured
> From sign to sign its steadfast course,
> Since every mortal power of Coleridge
> Was frozen at its marvellous source.
> The rapt one of the godlike forehead,
> The heaven-eyed creature, sleeps in earth:
> And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
> Has vanished from his lonely hearth.

The friends of Lamb were not slow in giving expression to their sorrow for his loss, and their admiration of his character—Wordsworth and Landor in verse, Procter, Moxon, Forster, and many others through various channels, in prose. For the most part they had to deal in generalities, for Mary Lamb still lived, and the full extent of her brother's devo-

tion and sacrifice could not yet be told. But abundant testimony was forthcoming that (to borrow Landor's words) he had left behind him that "worthier thing than tears,"

> The love of friends, without a single foe.

Wordsworth, in a beautiful tribute to his friend, begun with some view to an inscription for his grave, expressed no more than the verdict of all who knew him well when he wrote—

> Oh, he was good, if ever good man was.

And yet there must have been many of his old acquaintances who were startled at finding admiration for him thus expressed. Those who were not aware of the conditions of his life, or knew him only on his ordinary convivial side, regarded him, we are assured, as a flippant talker, reckless indeed in speech, moody, and of uncertain temper. Few could know what Coleridge and Wordsworth and Southey knew so well, that with all his boastful renunciation of orthodoxy in belief, and his freedom of criticism on religious matters, he was one capable of feeling keenly both the sentiment and the principle of religious trust. There is ample evidence of this in those early letters written in the darkest hours of his life. And though the sentiment waned as a different class of associates gathered round him, and there were few at hand with whom to interchange his deeper thoughts, religion in him never died, but

became a habit—a habit of enduring hardness, and cleaving to the steadfast performance of duty in face of the strongest allurements to the pleasanter and easier course. He set himself a task, one of the saddest and hardest that can be undertaken, to act as guardian and companion to one living always on the brink of insanity. For eight-and-thirty years he was faithful to this purpose, giving up everything for it, and never thinking that he had done enough, or could do enough, for his early friend, his "guardian angel."

It is noteworthy that those surface qualities of Charles Lamb by which so many were content to judge him, were just those which men are slow to connect with sterling goodness such as this. There was a certain Bohemianism in him, it must be allowed—a fondness for over-much tobacco and gin-and-water, and for the company of those whom more particular people looked shy upon. He often fretted against the loss of time they caused him, but he was tolerant for the moment of what fed his sense of humour or fancy, and always of that which touched the "virtue of compassion" in him. He was free of speech, and not in the least afraid of shocking his company. And it seems a natural inference that such traits betoken a hand-to-mouth existence, a certain want of moral backbone, irregularity in money matters, and the absence of any settled purpose. Yet it was for the opposite of all this that Lamb's life is so notable. He was well versed in poverty—for some

years in marked degree—but he seems never to have exceeded his income, or to have been in debt. In the days of his most straitened means he was never so poor but that he had in reserve something to help those poorer than himself. His letters show this throughout; and as his own fortunes mended, his generosity in giving becomes truly surprising. "He gave away *greatly*," says his friend Mr. Procter, and goes on to relate how on one occasion when he was in low spirits, and Lamb imagined that it might proceed from pecuniary causes, he said suddenly, "My dear boy, I have a quantity of useless things—I have now in my desk a—a hundred pounds—that I don't *know* what to do with. Take it." In his more prosperous days he always had pensioners on his bounty. For many years he allowed his old schoolmistress thirty pounds a year. To a friend of Southey's who was paralysed, he paid ten pounds yearly; and when a subscription was raised for Godwin in his gravest difficulties, Lamb's contribution was the munificent one of fifty pounds. His letters, too, prove that he could always make the more difficult sacrifices of time and thought when others were in need. For a young lady establishing a school—for a poor fellow seeking an occasional clerkship in the India House—for such as these he is continually pleading and taking trouble. And before he knew that the Directors of the India House intended to provide for his sister, in the event of her surviving him, on the footing of a wife, he had managed to put by a sufficient

sum to place her beyond the reach of want. At his death he left a sum of two thousand pounds for his sister during her life, with a reversion to the child of their adoption, Emma Isola, then Mrs. Moxon.

Mary Lamb survived her brother nearly thirteen years, dying at the advanced age of 82, on the 20th of May 1847. After the death of Charles her health rallied sufficiently for her to visit occasionally among their old friends; but as years passed, her attacks became still more frequent, and of longer duration, till her mind became permanently enfeebled. After leaving Edmonton, she lived chiefly in St. John's Wood, under the care of a nurse. Her pension, together with the income from her brother's savings, was amply sufficient for her few needs.

"She will live for ever in the memory of her friends," writes that true and faithful friend, Crabb Robinson, "as one of the most amiable and admirable of women." From this verdict there is no dissentient voice. With much less from which to form a direct opinion than in her brother's case, we seem to read her character almost equally well. The tributes of her brother scattered through essay and letter, her own few but very significant letters, and her contributions to literature, show a strong and healthy common sense, a true womanliness, and a gift of keen and active sympathy. She shared with Charles a love of Quaker-like colour and homeliness in dress. "She wore a neat cap," Mr. Procter tells us, "of the fashion of her youth; an old-fashioned dress. Her

face was pale and somewhat square, but very placid, with gray intelligent eyes. She was very mild in her manners to strangers; and to her brother, gentle and tender always. She had often an upward look of peculiar meaning when directed towards him, as though to give him assurance that all was then well with her." This unvarying manner, betokening mutual dependence and interest, was the feature that most impressed all who watched them together, her eyes often fixed on his as on "some adoring disciple," and ever listening to help his speech in some difficult word, and to anticipate the coming need. He in turn was always on the watch to detect any sign in her face of failing health or spirits, and to divert the conversation, if occasion arose, from any topic that might distress her or set up some dangerous excitement. Among the strange and motley guests that their hospitality brought around them, her own opinions and habits remained, with little danger of being shaken. "It has been the lot of my cousin," writes Lamb in the essay *Mackery End*, "oftener perhaps than I could have wished, to have had for her associates, and mine, free thinkers, leaders and disciples of novel philosophies and systems; but she neither wrangles with nor accepts their opinions. That which was good and venerable to her when she was a child retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding." It was this element of quietism in Mary Lamb that made her so inestimable a com-

panion for her brother. She was strong where he was weak, and reposeful where he was so often ill at ease.

She was indeed fitted in all respects to be Charles Lamb's lifelong companion. She shared his worthiest tastes, to the full. More catholic in her partialities than he, she devoured modern books as well as ancient with unfailing appetite, and had formed out of her reading a pure and idiomatic English style, with just a touch, as in everything else belonging to her, of an old-world formality. She possessed a distinct gift of humour, as her portion of *Mrs. Leicester's School* amply shows. The story of the *Father's Wedding-day* has strokes of humour and observation not unworthy of Goldsmith. Landor used to rave, with characteristic vehemence, about this little sketch, and to declare that the incident of the child wishing, when dressed in her new frock, that her poor "mamma was alive, to see how fine she was on papa's wedding-day," was a masterpiece. The story called *The Young Mahometan* has a special interest as containing yet one more recollection of the old house at Blakesware. The medallions of the Twelve Cæsars, the Hogarth prints, and the tapestry hangings are all there, together with that picturesque incident, which Charles elsewhere has not overlooked, of the broken battledore and shuttlecock telling of happy children's voices that had once echoed through the lonely chambers. It is certain that Charles and Mary, ardently as they both

clung in after years to London sights and sounds, owed much both in genius and character to having breathed the purer, calmer air of rural homesteads.

A common education, whether that of sweet garden scenes, or the choice fancies and meditations of poet and moralist—a sense of mutual need—a profound pity for each other's frailties—of these was forged the bond that held them, and years of suffering and self-denial had made it ever more and more strong. "That we had much to struggle with as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of." It is with these words of divine philosophy that, when comparative ease had at last been achieved, Charles Lamb could look back upon the anxious past.

CHAPTER IX

LAMB'S PLACE AS A CRITIC

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IT remains to speak of those prose writings of Lamb, many of earlier date than the *Essays of Elia*, by which his quality as a critic must be determined. As early as 1811 he had published in Leigh Hunt's *Reflector* his essay on *The Genius and Character of Hogarth.* This was no subject taken up for the occasion. "His graphic representations," says Lamb, "are indeed books: they have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of *words*"—and no book was more familiar to him. A set of Hogarth's prints, including the *Harlot's* and *Rake's Progresses*, had been among the treasures of the old house at Blakesware; and Lamb as a child had spelled through their grim and ghastly histories again and again, till he came to know every figure and incident in them by heart. And now the cavalier tone in which certain leaders of the classical and historical schools of painting were wont to dismiss Hogarth as of slight value in point of art, made him keen to vindicate his old favourite. He has scant patience with those who noted defective drawing or "knowledge of the figure" in the artist. He is intolerant altogether of technical criticism. The essay is devoted to showing how true a moralist the painter is, and how false the view which would regard him chiefly

as a humorist. He is a great satirist—a Juvenal or a Persius. Moreover, he is a combination of satirist and dramatist. Hogarth had claimed for his pictures that they should be judged as successive scenes in a play, and Lamb takes him at his word. He is carried away by admiration for the tragic power displayed. He is in ecstasies over the print of *Gin Lane,* certainly one of the poorest of Hogarth's pictures as a composition, losing its due effect by over-crowding of incident, and made grotesque through sheer exaggeration. Yet what stirs the critic's heart is "the pity of it," and he is in no humour to admit other considerations. He calls it "a sublime print." "Every part is full of strange images of death; it is perfectly amazing and astounding to look at"; and so forth. It is noticeable that Lamb does not write with the pictures before him, and trusts to a memory not quite trustworthy. For example, to prove that Hogarth is not merely repulsive, that there is always a sweet humanity in reserve as a foil for the horrors he deals with—something to "keep the general air from tainting," he says: "Take the mild, supplicating posture of patient poverty, in the poor woman that is persuading the pawnbroker to accept her clothes in pledge in the plate of *Gin Lane.*" There is really no such incident in the picture. There is a woman offering in pawn her kettle and fire-irons; but, taken in combination with all the other incidents of the scene, she is certainly pledging them to buy

gin. Here, as elsewhere, Lamb damages his case by over-statement, partly through love of surprises, partly because he willingly discovered in poem or picture what he wished to find there. He sees more of humanity and sweetness in what affects him than is actually present. He reads something of himself into the composition he is reviewing. He is on safer ground when he dwells on the genuine power, the pity and the terror, in that last scene but one of *The Marriage-à-la-Mode;* and on the gentleness of the wife's countenance, poetising the whole scene, in the print of *The Distressed Poet.* And he is doing a service to art of larger scope than fixing the respective ranks of Hogarth and Poussin, in these noble concluding lines:—

"I say not that all the ridiculous subjects of Hogarth have necessarily something in them to make us like them; some are indifferent to us, some in their natures repulsive, and only made interesting by the wonderful skill and truth to nature in the painter; but I contend that there is in most of them that sprinkling of the better nature which, like holy water, chases away and disperses the contagion of the bad. They have this in them besides, that they bring us acquainted with the everyday human face; they give us skill to detect those gradations of sense and virtue (which escape the careless or fastidious observer) in the countenances of the world about us; and prevent that disgust at common life, that *tædium quotidianarum formarum,* which an unre-

stricted passion for ideal forms and beauties is in danger of producing."

His judgments of pictures are, as might be expected, those of a man of letters, not of a painter. It is the *story* in the picture that impresses him, and the technical qualities leave him unmoved. A curious instance of this is afforded in his essay on *The Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art.* After complaining that, with the exception of Hogarth, no artist within the last fifty years had treated a story *imaginatively*—"upon whom his subject has so acted that it has seemed to direct *him*, not to be arranged by him"—he breaks out into a fine rhapsody on the famous *Bacchus and Ariadne* of Titian in the National Gallery. But it is not as a masterpiece of colour and drawing that it excites his admiration. The qualities of the poet, not those of the painter, are what he discovers in it. It is the "imaginative faculty" which he detects, as shown in the power of uniting the past and the present. "Precipitous, with his reeling satyr-rout around him, re-peopling and re-illuming suddenly the waste places, drunk with a new fury beyond the grape, Bacchus, born of fire, fire-like flings himself at the Cretan": this is the *present.* Ariadne, "unconscious of Bacchus, or but idly casting her eyes as upon some unconcerning pageant, her soul undistracted from Theseus"—Ariadne, "pacing the solitary shore in as much heart-silence, and in almost the same local solitude, with which she awoke at

daybreak to catch the forlorn last glances of the sail that bore away the Athenian": this is the *past.* But it is in the situation itself, not in Titian's treatment of it, that Lamb has found the antithesis that so delights him. He is in fact the poet, taking the subject out of the painter's hands, and treating it afresh. Lamb obtains an easy victory for the ancients over the moderns by choosing as his foil for Titian and Raffaelle the treatment of sacred subjects by Martin, the painter of *Belshazzar's Feast* and *The Plains of Heaven.* And it is significant of a certain inability in Lamb to do full justice to his contemporaries, that in noting the barrenness of the fifty years in question in the matter of art, he has no exception to make but Hogarth. He might have had a word to say for Turner and Wilkie.

The essay on *The Artificial Comedy of the Last Century* has received more attention than its importance at all warrants, from the circumstance that Macaulay set to work seriously to demolish its reasoning, in reviewing Leigh Hunt's edition of the Restoration Dramatists. Lamb's essay was originally part of a larger essay upon the old actors, in which he was led to speak of the comedies of Congreve and Wycherley, and the reasons why they no longer held the stage. His line of defence is well known. He protests that the world in which their characters move is so wholly artificial—a conventional world, quite apart from that of real life—that it is beside the mark to judge them by any moral

standard. "They are a world of themselves almost as much as fairy-land." The apology is really (as Hartley Coleridge acutely points out) for those who, like himself, could enjoy the wit of these writers, without finding their actual judgment of moral questions at all influenced by it. It must be admitted that Lamb does not convince us of the sincerity of his reasoning, and probably he did not convince himself. He loved paradox; and he loved, moreover, to find some soul of goodness in things evil. As Hartley Coleridge adds, it was his way always to take hold of things "by the better handle."

The same love of paradox is manifest in the essay on *Shakspeare's Tragedies*, "considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation." If there are any positions which we should *not* expect to find Lamb disputing, they are the acting qualities of Shakspeare's plays, and the intellectual side of the actor's art. Yet these are what he devotes this paper to impugning. He had been much disgusted by the fulsome flattery contained in the epitaph on Garrick in Westminster Abbey. In this bombastic effusion, this "farrago of false thoughts and nonsense," as Lamb calls it, Garrick is put on a level with Shakspeare:—

> And till Eternity with power sublime
> Shall mark the mortal hour of hoary Time,
> Shakspeare and Garrick like twin-stars shall shine,
> And earth irradiate with a beam divine.

Why is it, asks Lamb, that "from the days of the

actor here celebrated to our own, it should have been the fashion to compliment every performer in his turn, that has had the luck to please the town in any of the great characters of Shakspeare, with the notion of possessing *a mind congenial with the poet's:* how people should come thus unaccountably to confound the power of originating poetical images and conceptions with the faculty of being able to read or recite the same when put into words?" And he goes on, in the same strain of contempt, to speak of the "low tricks upon the eye and ear," which the player can so easily compass, as contrasted with the "absolute mastery over the heart and soul of man, which a great dramatic poet possesses." No one knew better than Lamb that the resources of the actor's art are not fairly or adequately stated in such language as this. He had himself the keenest relish for good acting, and no one has described and criticised it more finely. Witness his description of his favourite Munden, in the part of the Greenwich Pensioner, Old Dosey, and of Bensley's conception of the character of Malvolio. Or, again, take the exquisite passage in which he recalls Mrs. Jordan's performance of Viola: "There is no giving an account how she delivered the disguised story of her love for Orsino. It was no set speech, that she had foreseen, so as to weave it into a harmonious period, line necessarily following line to make up the music —yet I have heard it so spoken, or rather *read*, not without its grace and beauty; but when she had

declared her sister's history to be a 'blank,' and that she 'never told her love,' there was a pause, as if the story had ended—and then the image of the 'worm in the bud' came up as a new suggestion—and the heightened image of 'Patience' still followed after that, as by some growing (and not mechanical) process, thought springing up after thought, I would almost say, as they were watered by her tears." We are quite sure that the writer of these eloquent words did not seriously regard the art of acting as a mere succession of tricks "upon the eye and ear." He was for the moment prejudiced against the great actor—whom, by the way, he had never seen, Garrick having left the stage in 1776—by the injudicious language of his flatterers. But if we make due allowance for his outburst of spleen, we shall find much that is admirably true mixed up with it. Critics have often, for instance, insisted upon what is gained by seeing a drama acted, as distinguished from reading it, and Lamb here devotes himself to showing how far it is from being all gain. "It is difficult for a frequent playgoer to disembarrass the idea of Hamlet from the person and voice of Mr. Kemble. We speak of Lady Macbeth, while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. Siddons." We get distinctness, says Lamb, from seeing a character thus embodied, but "dearly do we pay" for this sense of distinctness.

This line of criticism leads up to the crowning paradox of this essay, that the plays of Shakspeare

"are less calculated for performance on a stage than those of almost any other dramatist whatever." Here again it may be said that no one knew better than Lamb that in a most important sense these words are the very reverse of truth. There is no quality in which Shakspeare's greatness as a dramatist is more conspicuous than his knowledge of what is effective in stage representation. But Lamb chose to mean something very different from this. He was thinking of certain other qualities in the poet which are incommunicable by the medium of acting, and on these he proceeds to dwell, discussing for that purpose the traditional stage rendering of Hamlet and other characters. He points out how the stage Hamlet almost always overdoes his scorn for Polonius, and his brutality to Ophelia, and asks the reason of this. It does not seem to occur to him that this is simply *bad* acting, and that it is not at all a necessary incident of the art that Hamlet's feelings should be thus represented. He seems to be confounding the limitations of the particular actor with those of his art. Indeed it is clear that many of the positions maintained in this paper are simply convenient opportunities for enlarging upon some character or conception of the great dramatist.

Lamb had a juster complaint against Garrick than that supplied by the words of a foolish epitaph. He boldly expresses a doubt whether the actor was capable of any real admiration for Shakspeare. Would any true lover of his plays, he asks, have "admitted

into his matchless scenes such ribald trash" as Tate and Cibber and the rest had foisted into the acting versions of the dramas? Much of the scorn and indignation expressed by Lamb in this paper, becomes intelligible when we recall in what garbled shapes the dramatist was presented. Garrick himself had taken a prominent share in these alterations of the text. It was he who completely changed the last act of *Hamlet*, and turned the *Winter's Tale* into a piece of Arcadian insipidity. But the greatest outrage of all, in Lamb's view, would be Tate's version of Lear —in a modified edition of which Garrick himself had performed. In this version—which the editor of Bell's acting edition (1774) calls a "judicious blending" of Shakspeare and Tate—the character of the Fool is altogether omitted; Cordelia survives, and marries Edgar; and Lear, Kent, and Gloster announce their intention of retiring into private life, to watch the happiness of the young couple, Lear himself bringing down the curtain with these amazing lines:—

> "Thou, Kent, and I, retired from noise and strife,
> Will calmly pass our short reserves of time
> In cool reflections on our fortunes past,
> Cheered with relation of the prosperous reign
> Of this celestial pair; thus our remains
> Shall in an even course of thoughts be past,
> Enjoy the present hour, nor fear the last."

This was the stuff which in Lamb's day the actors and their audience were content to accept as the work of the Master-hand. It may well account for a tone of

bitterness, and even of exaggeration, that pervades the essay. It is some compensation that it drew from Lamb his noble vindication of Shakspeare's original. The passage is well known, but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting it once again:—

"The Lear of Shakspeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements than any actor can be to represent Lear; they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual; the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano; they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on: even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we *are* Lear; we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodised from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks or tones to do with that sublime identification of his age with

that of the *heavens themselves*, when in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children he reminds them that 'they themselves are old'? What gestures shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things? But the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show: it is too hard and stony; it must have love-scenes and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter; she must shine as a lover too. Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily. A happy ending!—as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through, the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation—why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? as if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station—as if, at his years, and with his experience, anything was left but to die."

No passage in Lamb's writings is better fitted than this to illustrate his peculiar power as a commentator. It as little suggests Hazlitt or Coleridge as it does Schlegel or Gervinus. It is more remote still—it need hardly be added—from the fantastic tricks of a later day, which are doing all they can to make Shakspearian criticism hideous. Lamb's emphatic

vindication of the course of events in Shakspeare's tragedy of course implies a criticism and a commendation of the dramatist. But no one feels that he is either patronising or judging Shakspeare. He takes Lear, as it were, out of the hands of literature, and regards him as a human being placed in the world where all men have to suffer and be tempted. We forget that he is a character in a play, or even in history. Lamb's criticism is a commentary on life, and no truer homage could be paid to the dramatist than that he should be allowed for the time to pass out of our thoughts.

Thoroughly characteristic of Lamb is the admirable paper on *The Sanity of True Genius*, suggested by Dryden's famous line as to "great wit" being nearly allied to madness. It aims to disprove this, and to show that, on the contrary, the greatest wits "will ever be found to be the sanest writers." He illustrates this by the use that Shakspeare and others make of the supernatural persons and situations in their writings. "Caliban, the Witches, are as true to the laws of their own nature (ours with a difference) as Othello, Hamlet, and Macbeth. Herein the great and the little wits are differenced: that if the latter wander ever so little from nature or actual existence, they lose themselves and their readers." And with a marvellous semblance of paradox, which yet is felt to be profoundly true, he proceeds to declare that in Spenser's Episode of the "Cave of Mammon," where the Money-God, and his daughter Ambition

and Pilate washing his hands—the most discordant persons and situations—are introduced, the controlling power of the poet's sanity makes the whole more actually consistent than the characters and situations of everyday life in the latest novel from the Minerva Press. It is a proof, he says, "of that hidden sanity which still guides the poet in his wildest seeming aberrations." No detached sentences can, however, convey an idea of this splendid argument. Nothing that Lamb has written proves more decisively how large a part the higher imagination plays in true criticism; nothing better illustrates the truth of Butler's claim, that the poet

> must be tried by his peers,
> And not by pedants and philosophers.

That Lamb was a poet is at the root of his greatness as a critic; and his own judgments of poetry show the same sanity to which he points in his poetical brethren. He is never so impulsive or discursive that he fails to show how unerring is his judgment on all points connected with the poet's art. There had been those before Lamb, for example, who had quoted and called attention to the poetry of George Wither; but no one had thought of noticing that his metre was also that of Ambrose Philips, and that Pope and his friends had only proved their own defective ear by seeking to make it ridiculous. "To the measure in which these lines are written, the wits of Queen Anne's days con-

temptuously gave the name of Namby-Pamby, in ridicule of Ambrose Philips, who has used it in some instances, as in the lines on Cuzzoni, to my feeling at least very deliciously; but Wither, whose darling measure it seems to have been, may show that in skilful hands it is capable of expressing the subtlest movement of passion. So true it is, what Drayton seems to have felt, that it is the poet who modifies the metre, not the metre the poet."

It was in the margin of a copy of Wither's poems that this exquisite comment was originally made; and in such a casual way did much of Lamb's finest criticism come into being. All through his life, in letter and essay, he was making remarks of this kind, throwing them out by the way, never thinking that they would be hereafter treasured up as the most luminous and penetrative judgments of the century. And it may well be asked why, with such a range of sympathy, from Marlowe to Ambrose Philips, from Sir T. Browne to Sir William Temple, he was so limited, so one-sided in his estimate of the literature of his own age? It is true that he was among the first in England to appreciate Burns and Wordsworth. But to Scott, Byron, and Shelley he entertained a feeling almost of aversion. He was glad (as we gather from the essay on *The Sanity of True Genius*) that "a happier genius" had arisen to expel the "innutritious phantoms" of the Minerva Press; but the success of the Waverley Novels seems to have caused him amusement rather than any other

feeling. About Byron he wrote to Joseph Cottle, "I have a thorough aversion to his character, and a very moderate admiration of his genius: he is great in so little a way. To be a poet is to be the man, not a petty portion of occasional low passion worked up in a permanent form of humanity." Shelley's poetry he told Barton he did not understand, and that it was "thin sown with profit or delight." When he read Goethe's *Faust* (of course in an English version), he at once pronounced it inferior to Marlowe's in the chief *motive* of the plot, and was evidently content to let criticism end there. Something of this may be ascribed to a jealousy in Lamb—a strange and needless jealousy for his own loved writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a fear lest the newcomers should usurp some of the praise and renown that he claimed for them; something, also, to a perverseness in him which made him like to be in opposition to the current opinion, whatever it might be. He was often unwilling, rather than unable, to discuss the claims of a new candidate for public favour. He lived mainly in communion with an older literature. It was to him inexhaustible in amount and in excellence, and he was impatient of what sought to divert his attention from it. It was literally true of him that "when a new book came out—he read an old one."

But even of the old ones, the classics of our literature, it was not easy to say what his opinion in any case would be. For instance, he was a great admirer

of Smollett, and was with great difficulty brought to admit the superiority of Fielding. And in the work of a greater humorist than Smollett, in the Picaresque school—*Gil Blas*—he would not acknowledge any merit at all. The truth is that for Lamb to enjoy a work of humour, it must embody a strong human interest, or at least have a pulse of humanity throbbing through it. Humour, without pity or tenderness, only repelled him. It was another phase of the same quality in him that—as we have seen in his estimate of Byron—where he was not drawn to the *man*, he was almost disabled from admiring, or even understanding, the man's work. Had he ever come face to face with the author for a single evening, the result might have been quite different.

There is no difficulty, therefore, in detecting the limitations of Lamb as a critic. In a most remarkable degree he had the defects of his qualities. Where his heart was, there his judgment was sound. Where he actively disliked, or was passively indifferent, his critical powers remained dormant. He was too fond of paradox, too much at the mercy of his emotions or the mood of the hour, to be a safe guide always. But where no disturbing forces interfered, he exercised a faculty almost unique in the history of criticism. When Southey heard of his *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets*, he wrote to Coleridge: "If co-operative labour were as practicable as it is desirable, what a history of English literature might he and you and I set forth!" Such an enterprise would

be, as Southey saw, all but impossible; but if the spiritual insight of Coleridge, and the unwearied industry and sober common-sense of Southey, could be combined with the special genius of Charles Lamb, something like the ideal commentary on English literature might be the result.

As it is, Lamb's contribution to that end is of the rarest value. If it is too much to say that he singly revived the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is because we see clearly that that revival was coming, and would have come even without his help. But he did more than recall attention to certain forgotten writers. He flashed a light from himself upon them, not only heightening every charm and deepening every truth, but making even their eccentricities beautiful and lovable. And in doing this he has linked his name for ever with theirs. When we think of "the sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention,—Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley,"—then the thought of Charles Lamb will never be far off. His name, too, has a perfume in the mention. "There are some reputations," wrote Southey to Caroline Bowles, "which will not keep, but Lamb's is not of that kind. His memory will retain its fragrance as long as the best spice that ever was expended upon one of the Pharaohs."

THE ADVENTURES OF ULYSSES

THE ADVENTURES OF ULYSSES

THIS work is designed as a supplement to the *Adventures of Telemachus*. It treats of the conduct and sufferings of Ulysses, the father of Telemachus. The picture which it exhibits is that of a brave man struggling with adversity; by a wise use of events, and with an inimitable presence of mind under difficulties, forcing out a way for himself through the severest trials to which human life can be exposed; with enemies natural and preternatural surrounding him on all sides. The agents in this tale, besides men and women, are giants, enchanters, sirens: things which denote external force or internal temptations, the twofold danger which a wise fortitude must expect to encounter in its course through this world. The fictions contained in it will be found to comprehend some of the most admired inventions of Grecian mythology.

The groundwork of the story is as old as the *Odyssey*, but the moral and the colouring are comparatively modern. By avoiding the prolixity which marks the speeches and the descriptions in *Homer*, I have gained a rapidity to the narration which I hope will make it more attractive and give it more the air of a romance to young readers, though I am sensible that by the curtailment I have sacrificed in many places the manners to the passion, the subordinate characteristics to the essential interest of the

story. The attempt is not to be considered as seeking a comparison with any of the direct translations of the *Odyssey*, either in prose or verse, though if I were to state the obligations which I have had to one obsolete version,[1] I should have run the hazard of depriving myself of the very slender degree of reputation which I could hope to acquire from a trifle like the present undertaking.

[1] The translation of *Homer* by Chapman in the reign of James I.

CHAPTER I

The Cicons—The fruit of the lotos-tree—Polyphemus and the Cyclops—The kingdom of the winds, and God Æolus's fatal present—The Læstrygonian man-eaters

THIS history tells of the wanderings of Ulysses and his followers in their return from Troy, after the destruction of that famous city of Asia by the Grecians. He was inflamed with a desire of seeing again, after a ten years' absence, his wife and native country Ithaca. He was king of a barren spot, and a poor country, in comparison of the fruitful plains of Asia which he was leaving, or the wealthy kingdoms which he touched upon in his return; yet wherever he came, he could never see a soil which appeared in his eyes half so sweet or desirable as his country earth. This made him refuse the offers of the goddess Calypso to stay with her, and partake of her immortality, in the delightful island: and this gave him strength to break from the enchantments of Circe, the daughter of the Sun.

From Troy ill winds cast Ulysses and his fleet upon the coast of the Cicons, a people hostile to the Grecians. Landing his forces, he laid siege to their chief city Ismarus, which he took, and with it much spoil, and slew many people. But success proved fatal to him; for his soldiers, elated with the spoil and the good store of provisions which they found in that place, fell to eating and drinking, forgetful

of their safety, till the Cicons, who inhabited the coast, had time to assemble their friends and allies from the interior, who mustering in prodigious force, set upon the Grecians, while they negligently revelled and feasted, and slew many of them and recovered the spoil. They, dispirited and thinned in their numbers, with difficulty made their retreat good to the ships.

Thence they set sail, sad at heart, yet something cheered that with such fearful odds against them they had not all been utterly destroyed. A dreadful tempest ensued, which for two nights and two days tossed them about, but the third day the weather cleared, and they had hopes of a favourable gale to carry them to Ithaca; but as they doubled the Cape of Malea, suddenly a north wind arising, drove them back as far as Cythera. After that, for the space of nine days, contrary winds continued to drive them in an opposite direction to the point to which they were bound, and the tenth day they put in at a shore where a race of men dwell that are sustained by the fruit of the lotos-tree. Here Ulysses sent some of his men to land for fresh water, who were met by certain of the inhabitants, that gave them some of their country food to eat; not with any ill intention towards them, though in the event it proved pernicious; for, having eaten of this fruit, so pleasant it proved to their appetite, that they in a minute quite forgot all thoughts of home, or of their countrymen, or of ever returning back to the ships

to give an account of what sort of inhabitants dwelt there, but they would needs stay and live there among them, and eat of that precious food for ever; and when Ulysses sent other of his men to look for them, and to bring them back by force, they strove, and wept, and would not leave their food for heaven itself, so much the pleasure of that enchanting fruit had bewitched them. But Ulysses caused them to be bound hand and foot, and cast under the hatches; and set sail with all possible speed from that baneful coast, lest others after them might taste the lotos, which had such strange qualities to make men forget their native country and the thoughts of home.

Coasting on all that night by unknown and out of the way shores, they came by day-break to the land where the Cyclops dwell, a sort of giant shepherds that neither sow nor plough, but the earth untilled produces for them rich wheat and barley and grapes, yet they have neither bread nor wine, nor know the arts of cultivation, nor care to know them; for they live each man to himself, without laws or government, or anything like a state or kingdom, but their dwellings are in caves, on the steep heads of mountains, every man's household governed by his own caprice, or not governed at all, their wives and children as lawless as themselves, none caring for others, but each doing as he or she thinks good. Ships or boats they have none, nor artificers to make them, no trade or commerce, or wish to visit other

shores; yet they have convenient places for harbours and for shipping. Here Ulysses with a chosen party of twelve followers landed, to explore what sort of men dwelt there, whether hospitable and friendly to strangers, or altogether wild and savage, for as yet no dwellers appeared in sight.

The first sign of habitation which they came to was a giant's cave rudely fashioned, but of a size which betokened the vast proportions of its owner, the pillars which supported it being the bodies of huge oaks or pines, in the natural state of the tree, and all about showed more marks of strength than skill in whoever built it. Ulysses, entering in, admired the savage contrivances and artless structure of the place, and longed to see the tenant of so outlandish a mansion; but well conjecturing that gifts would have more avail in extracting courtesy than strength could succeed in forcing it, from such a one as he expected to find the inhabitant, he resolved to flatter his hospitality with a present of Greek wine, of which he had store in twelve great vessels; so strong that no one ever drank it without an infusion of twenty parts of water to one of wine, yet the fragrance of it even then so delicious, that it would have vexed a man who smelled it to abstain from tasting it; but whoever tasted it, it was able to raise his courage to the height of heroic deeds. Taking with them a goatskin flagon full of this precious liquor, they ventured into the recesses of the cave. Here they pleased themselves a whole day with be-

holding the giant's kitchen, where the flesh of sheep and goats lay strewed, his dairy where goat-milk stood ranged in troughs and pails, his pens where he kept his live animals; but those he had driven forth to pasture with him when he went out in the morning. While they were feasting their eyes with a sight of these curiosities, their ears were suddenly deafened with a noise like the falling of a house. It was the owner of the cave who had been abroad all day feeding his flock, as his custom was, in the mountains, and now drove them home in the evening from pasture. He threw down a pile of fire-wood, which he had been gathering against supper time, before the mouth of the cave, which occasioned the crash they heard. The Grecians hid themselves in the remote parts of the cave, at sight of the uncouth monster. It was Polyphemus, the largest and savagest of the Cyclops, who boasted himself to be the son of Neptune. He looked more like a mountain crag than a man, and to his brutal body he had a brutish mind answerable. He drove his flock, all that gave milk, to the interior of the cave, but left the rams and the he-goats without. Then taking up a stone so massy that twenty oxen could not have drawn it, he placed it at the mouth of the cave, to defend the entrance, and sat him down to milk his ewes and his goats; which done, he lastly kindled a fire, and throwing his great eye round the cave (for the Cyclops have no more than one eye, and that placed in the midst of their fore-

head), by the glimmering light he discerned some of Ulysses' men.

"Ho, guests, what are you? merchants or wandering thieves?" he bellowed out in a voice which took from them all power of reply, it was so astounding.

Only Ulysses summoned resolution to answer, that they came neither for plunder nor traffic, but were Grecians who had lost their way, returning from Troy; which famous city, under the conduct of Agamemnon, the renowned son of Atreus, they had sacked, and laid level with the ground. Yet now they prostrated themselves humbly before his feet, whom they acknowledged to be mightier than they, and besought him that he would bestow the rites of hospitality upon them, for that Jove was the avenger of wrongs done to strangers, and would fiercely resent any injury which they might suffer.

"Fool," said the Cyclop, "to come so far to preach to me the fear of the gods. We Cyclops care not for your Jove, whom you fabled to be nursed by a goat, nor any of your blessed ones. We are stronger than they, and dare bid open battle to Jove himself, though you and all your fellows of the earth join with him." And he bade them tell him where their ship was, in which they came, and whether they had any companions. But Ulysses, with a wise caution, made answer, that they had no ship or companions, but were unfortunate men whom the sea, splitting their ship in pieces, had dashed upon his coast, and

they alone had escaped. He replied nothing, but gripping two of the nearest of them, as if they had been no more than children, he dashed their brains out against the earth, and (shocking to relate) tore in pieces their limbs, and devoured them, yet warm and trembling, making a lion's meal of them, lapping the blood: for the Cyclops are *man-eaters*, and esteem human flesh to be a delicacy far above goat's or kid's; though by reason of their abhorred customs few men approach their coast except some stragglers, or now and then a shipwrecked mariner. At a sight so horrid Ulysses and his men were like distracted people. He, when he had made an end of his wicked supper, drained a draught of goat's milk down his prodigious throat, and lay down and slept among his goats. Then Ulysses drew his sword, and half resolved to thrust it with all his might in at the bosom of the sleeping monster; but wiser thoughts restrained him, else they had there without help all perished, for none but Polyphemus himself could have removed that mass of stone which he had placed to guard the entrance. So they were constrained to abide all that night in fear.

When day came the Cyclop awoke, and kindling a fire, made his breakfast of two other of his unfortunate prisoners, then milked his goats as he was accustomed, and pushing aside the vast stone, and shutting it again when he had done, upon the prisoners, with as much ease as a man opens and shuts a quiver's lid, he let out his flock, and drove them

before him with whistlings (as sharp as winds in storms) to the mountains.

Then Ulysses, of whose strength or cunning the Cyclop seems to have had as little heed as of an infant's, being left alone, with the remnant of his men which the Cyclop had not devoured, gave manifest proof how far manly wisdom excels brutish force. He chose a stake from among the wood which the Cyclop had piled up for firing, in length and thickness like a mast, which he sharpened and hardened in the fire, and selected four men, and instructed them what they should do with this stake, and made them perfect in their parts.

When the evening was come, the Cyclop drove home his sheep; and as fortune directed it, either of purpose, or that his memory was overruled by the gods to his hurt (as in the issue it proved), he drove the males of his flock, contrary to his custom, along with the dams into the pens. Then shutting-to the stone of the cave, he fell to his horrible supper. When he had despatched two more of the Grecians, Ulysses waxed bold with the contemplation of his project, and took a bowl of Greek wine, and merrily dared the Cyclop to drink.

"Cyclop," he said, "take a bowl of wine from the hand of your guest; it may serve to digest the man's flesh that you have eaten, and show what drink our ship held before it went down. All I ask in recompense, if you find it good, is to be dismissed in a whole skin. Truly you must look to have few visi-

tors, if you observe this new custom of eating your guests."

The brute took and drank, and vehemently enjoyed the taste of wine, which was new to him, and swilled again at the flagon, and entreated for more, and prayed Ulysses to tell him his name, that he might bestow a gift upon the man who had given him such brave liquor. The Cyclops (he said) had grapes, but this rich juice (he swore) was simply divine. Again Ulysses plied him with the wine, and the fool drank it as fast as he poured out, and again he asked the name of his benefactor, which Ulysses cunningly dissembling, said: "My name is Noman; my kindred and friends in my own country call me Noman." "Then," said the Cyclop, "this is the kindness I will show thee, Noman; I will eat thee last of all thy friends." He had scarce expressed his savage kindness when the fumes of the strong wine overcame him, and he reeled down upon the floor and sank into a dead sleep.

Ulysses watched his time, while the monster lay insensible, and heartening up his men, they placed the sharp end of the stake in the fire till it was heated red-hot, and some god gave them a courage beyond that which they were used to have, and the four men with difficulty bored the sharp end of the huge stake, which they had heated red-hot, right into the eye of the drunken cannibal, and Ulysses helped to thrust it in with all his might, still farther and farther, with effort, as men bore with an auger,

till the scalded blood gushed out, and the eye-ball smoked, and the strings of the eye cracked, as the burning rafter broke in it, and the eye hissed, as hot iron hisses when it is plunged into water.

He waking, roared with the pain so loud that all the cavern broke into claps like thunder. They fled, and dispersed into corners. He plucked the burning stake from his eye, and hurled the wood madly about the cave. Then he cried out with a mighty voice for his brethren the Cyclops, that dwelt hard by in caverns upon hills; they hearing the terrible shout came flocking from all parts to inquire what ailed Polyphemus? and what cause he had for making such horrid clamours in the night-time to break their sleeps? if his fright proceeded from any mortal? if strength or craft had given him his death's blow? He made answer from within that Noman had hurt him, Noman had killed him, Noman was with him in the cave. They replied, "If no man has hurt thee, and no man is with thee, then thou art alone, and the evil that afflicts thee is from the hand of heaven, which none can resist or help." So they left him and went their way, thinking that some disease troubled him. He, blind and ready to split with the anguish of the pain, went groaning up and down in the dark, to find the doorway, which when he found, he removed the stone, and sat in the threshold, feeling if he could lay hold on any man going out with the sheep, which (the day now breaking) were beginning to issue forth to their accustomed pastures.

But Ulysses, whose first artifice in giving himself that ambiguous name, had succeeded so well with the Cyclop, was not of a wit so gross to be caught by that palpable device. But casting about in his mind all the ways which he could contrive for escape (no less than all their lives depending on the success), at last he thought of this expedient. He made knots of the osier twigs upon which the Cyclop commonly slept, with which he tied the fattest and fleeciest of the rams together, three in a rank, and under the belly of the middle ram he tied a man, and himself last, wrapping himself fast with both his hands in the rich wool of one, the fairest of the flock.

And now the sheep began to issue forth very fast; the males went first, the females unmilked stood by, bleating and requiring the hand of their shepherd in vain to milk them, their full bags sore with being unemptied, but he much sorer with the loss of sight. Still as the males passed, he felt the backs of those fleecy fools, never dreaming that they carried his enemies under their bellies: so they passed on till the last ram came loaded with his wool and Ulysses together. He stopped that ram and felt him, and had his hand once in the hair of Ulysses, yet knew it not, and he chid the ram for being last, and spoke to it as if it understood him, and asked it whether it did not wish that its master had his eye again, which that abominable Noman with his execrable rout had put out, when they had got him

down with wine; and he willed the ram to tell him whereabouts in the cave his enemy lurked, that he might dash his brains and strew them about, to ease his heart of that tormenting revenge which rankled in it. After a deal of such foolish talk to the beast he let it go.

When Ulysses found himself free, he let go his hold, and assisted in disengaging his friends. The rams which had befriended them they carried off with them to the ships, where their companions with tears in their eyes received them, as men escaped from death. They plied their oars, and set their sails, and when they were got as far off from shore as a voice would reach, Ulysses cried out to the Cyclop: "Cyclop, thou should'st not have so much abused thy monstrous strength, as to devour thy guests. Jove by my hand sends thee requital to pay thy savage inhumanity." The Cyclop heard, and came forth enraged, and in his anger he plucked a fragment of a rock, and threw it with blind fury at the ships: it narrowly escaped lighting upon the bark in which Ulysses sat, but with the fall it raised so fierce an ebb, as bore back the ship till it almost touched the shore. "Cyclop," said Ulysses, "if any ask thee who imposed on thee that unsightly blemish in thine eye, say it was Ulysses, son of Laertes: the king of Ithaca am I called, the waster of cities." Then they crowded sail, and beat the old sea, and forth they went with a forward gale; sad for forepast losses, yet glad to have escaped at any rate;

till they came to the isle where Æolus reigned, who is god of the winds.

Here Ulysses and his men were courteously received by the monarch, who showed him his twelve children which have rule over the twelve winds. A month they stayed and feasted with him, and at the end of the month he dismissed them with many presents, and gave to Ulysses at parting an ox's hide, in which were enclosed *all the winds:* only he left abroad the western wind, to play upon their sails and waft them gently home to Ithaca. This bag, bound in a glittering silver band, so close that no breath could escape, Ulysses hung up at the mast. His companions did not know its contents, but guessed that the monarch had given to him some treasures of gold or silver.

Nine days they sailed smoothly, favoured by the western wind, and by the tenth they approached so nigh as to discern lights kindled on the shores of their country earth; when, by ill fortune, Ulysses, overcome with fatigue of watching the helm, fell asleep. The mariners seized the opportunity, and one of them said to the rest: "A fine time has this leader of ours: wherever he goes he is sure of presents, when we come away empty-handed; and see, what king Æolus has given him, store no doubt of gold and silver." A word was enough to those covetous wretches, who quick as thought untied the bag, and instead of gold, out rushed with mighty noise *all the winds.* Ulysses with the noise awoke

and saw their mistake, but too late, for the ship was driving with all the winds back far from Ithaca, far as to the island of Æolus from which they had parted, in one hour measuring back what in nine days they had scarcely tracked, and in sight of home too! Up he flew amazed, and raving doubted whether he should not fling himself into the sea for grief of his bitter disappointment. At last he hid himself under the hatches for shame. And scarce could he be prevailed upon, when he was told he was arrived again in the harbour of king Æolus, to go himself or send to that monarch for a second succour; so much the disgrace of having misused his royal bounty (though it was the crime of his followers and not his own) weighed upon him: and when at last he went, and took a herald with him, and came where the god sat on his throne, feasting with his children, he would not trust in among them at their meat, but set himself down like one unworthy in the threshold.

Indignation seized Æolus to behold him in that manner returned; and he said: "Ulysses, what has brought you back? are you so soon tired of your country? or did not our present please you? we thought we had given you a kingly passport." Ulysses made answer: "My men have done this ill mischief to me: they did it while I slept." "Wretch," said Æolus, "avaunt, and quit our shores: it fits not us to convoy men whom the gods hate, and will have perish."

Forth they sailed, but with far different hopes than when they left the same harbour the first time with all the winds confined, only the west-wind suffered to play upon their sails to waft them in gentle murmurs to Ithaca. They were now the sport of every gale that blew, and despaired of ever seeing home more. Now those covetous mariners were cured of their surfeit for gold, and would not have touched it if it had lain in untold heaps before them.

Six days and nights they drove along, and on the seventh day they put in to Lamos, a port of the Læstrygonians. So spacious this harbour was, that it held with ease all their fleet, which rode at anchor, safe from any storms, all but the ship in which Ulysses was embarked. He, as if prophetic of the mischance which followed, kept still without the harbour, making fast his bark to a rock at the land's point, which he climbed with purpose to survey the country. He saw a city with smoke ascending from the roofs, but neither ploughs going, nor oxen yoked, nor any sign of agricultural works. Making choice of two men, he sent them to the city to explore what sort of inhabitants dwelt there. His messengers had not gone far before they met a damsel, of stature surpassing human, who was coming to draw water from a spring. They asked her who dwelt in that land. She made no reply, but led them in silence to her father's palace. He was a monarch and named Antiphas. He and all his people were giants. When they entered the palace, a woman, the mother of the

damsel, but far taller than she, rushed abroad and called for Antiphas. He came, and snatching up one of the two men, made as if he would devour him. The other fled. Antiphas raised a mighty shout, and instantly, this way and that, multitudes of gigantic people issued out at the gates, and making for the harbour, tore up huge pieces of the rocks, and flung them at the ships which lay there, all which they utterly overwhelmed and sank; and the unfortunate bodies of men which floated, and which the sea did not devour, these cannibals thrust through with harpoons, like fishes, and bore them off to their dire feast. Ulysses with his single bark that had never entered the harbour escaped; that bark which was now the only vessel left of all the gallant navy that had set sail with him from Troy. He pushed off from the shore, cheering the sad remnant of his men, whom horror at the sight of their countrymen's fate had almost turned to marble.

CHAPTER II

The house of Circe—Men changed into beasts—The voyage to hell—The banquet of the dead

ON went the single ship till it came to the island of Æea, where Circe the dreadful daughter of the Sun dwelt. She was deeply skilled in magic, a haughty beauty, and had hair like the Sun. The Sun was her parent, and begot her and her brother Æetes

(such another as herself) upon Perse, daughter to Oceanus.

Here a dispute arose among Ulysses' men, which of them should go ashore and explore the country; for there was a necessity that some should go to procure water and provisions, their stock of both being nigh spent: but their hearts failed them when they called to mind the shocking fate of their fellows whom the Læstrygonians had eaten, and those which the foul Cyclop Polyphemus had crushed between his jaws; which moved them so tenderly in the recollection that they wept. But tears never yet supplied any man's wants; this Ulysses knew full well, and dividing his men (all that were left) into two companies, at the head of one of which was himself, and at the head of the other Eurylochus, a man of tried courage, he cast lots which of them should go up into the country, and the lot fell upon Eurylochus and his company, two and twenty in number; who took their leave, with tears, of Ulysses and his men that stayed, whose eyes wore the same wet badges of weak humanity, for they surely thought never to see these their companions again, but that on every coast where they should come, they should find nothing but savages and cannibals.

Eurylochus and his party proceeded up the country, till in a dale they descried the house of Circe, built of bright stone, by the road's side. Before her gate lay many beasts, as wolves, lions, leopards, which, by her art, of wild she had rendered tame.

These arose when they saw strangers, and ramped upon their hinder paws, and fawned upon Eurylochus and his men, who dreaded the effects of such monstrous kindness; and staying at the gate they heard the enchantress within, sitting at her loom, singing such strains as suspended all mortal faculties, while she wove a web, subtle and glorious, and of texture inimitable on earth, as all the housewiferies of the deities are. Strains so ravishingly sweet, provoked even the sagest and prudentest heads among the party to knock and call at the gate. The shining gate the enchantress opened, and bade them come in and feast. They unwise followed, all but Eurylochus, who stayed without the gate, suspicious that some train was laid for them. Being entered, she placed them in chairs of state, and set before them meal and honey, and Smyrna wine; but mixed with baneful drugs of powerful enchantment. When they had eaten of these, and drunk of her cup, she touched them with her charming-rod, and straight they were transformed into swine, having the bodies of swine, the bristles, and snout, and grunting noise of that animal; only they still retained the minds of men, which made them the more to lament their brutish transformation. Having changed them, she shut them up in her sty with many more whom her wicked sorceries had formerly changed, and gave them swine's food, mast, and acorns, and chestnuts, to eat.

Eurylochus, who beheld nothing of these sad

changes from where he was stationed without the gate, only instead of his companions that entered (who he thought had all vanished by witchcraft) beheld a herd of swine, hurried back to the ship, to give an account of what he had seen: but so frightened and perplexed, that he could give no distinct report of anything, only he remembered a palace, and a woman singing at her work, and gates guarded by lions. But his companions, he said, were all vanished.

Then Ulysses suspecting some foul witchcraft, snatched his sword, and his bow, and commanded Eurylochus instantly to lead him to the place. But Eurylochus fell down, and embracing his knees, besought him by the name of a man whom the gods had in their protection, not to expose his safety, and the safety of them all, to certain destruction.

"Do thou then stay, Eurylochus!" answered Ulysses: "eat thou and drink in the ship in safety; while I go alone upon this adventure: necessity, from whose law is no appeal, compels me."

So saying, he quitted the ship and went on shore, accompanied by none; none had the hardihood to offer to partake that perilous adventure with him, so much they dreaded the enchantments of the witch. Singly he pursued his journey till he came to the shining gates which stood before her mansion: but when he essayed to put his foot over her threshold, he was suddenly stopped by the apparition of a young man, bearing a golden rod in his hand, who was the god Mercury. He held Ulysses by the wrist, to stay

his entrance; and "Whither wouldest thou go?" he said; "O, thou most erring of the sons of men! knowest thou not that this is the house of great Circe, where she keeps thy friends in a loathsome sty, changed from the fair forms of men into the detestable and ugly shapes of swine? art thou prepared to share their fate, from which nothing can ransom thee?" But neither his words, nor his coming from heaven, could stop the daring foot of Ulysses, whom compassion for the misfortune of his friends had rendered careless of danger: which when the god perceived, he had pity to see valour so misplaced, and gave him the flower of the herb *moly*, which is sovereign against enchantments. The moly is a small unsightly root, its virtues but little known, and in low estimation; the dull shepherd treads on it every day with his clouted shoes; but it bears a small white flower, which is medicinal against charms, blights, mildews, and damps.—"Take this in thy hand," said Mercury, "and with it boldly enter her gates: when she shall strike thee with her rod, thinking to change thee, as she has changed thy friends, boldly rush in upon her with thy sword, and extort from her the dreadful oath of the gods, that she will use no enchantments against thee: then force her to restore thy abused companions." He gave Ulysses the little white flower, and instructing him how to use it, vanished.

When the god was departed, Ulysses with loud knockings beat at the gate of the palace. The shin-

ing gates were opened, as before, and great Circe with hospitable cheer invited in her guest. She placed him on a throne with more distinction than she had used to his fellows, she mingled wine in a costly bowl, and he drank of it, mixed with those poisonous drugs. When he had drunk, she struck him with her charming-rod, and "To your sty," she cried; "out, swine; mingle with your companions." But those powerful words were not proof against the preservative which Mercury had given to Ulysses; he remained unchanged, and as the god had directed him, boldly charged the witch with his sword, as if he meant to take her life: which when she saw, and perceived that her charms were weak against the antidote which Ulysses bore about him, she cried out and bent her knees beneath his sword, embracing his, and said, "Who or what manner of man art thou? Never drank any man before thee of this cup, but he repented it in some brute's form. Thy shape remains unaltered as thy mind. Thou canst be none other than Ulysses, renowned above all the world for wisdom, whom the fates have long since decreed that I must love. This haughty bosom bends to thee. O Ithacan, a goddess woos thee to her bed."

"O Circe," he replied, "how canst thou treat of love or marriage with one whose friends thou hast turned into beasts? and now offerest him thy hand in wedlock, only that thou mightest have him in thy power, to live the life of a beast with thee, naked, effeminate, subject to thy will, perhaps to be ad-

vanced in time to the honour of a place in thy sty. What pleasure canst thou promise, which may tempt the soul of a reasonable man? thy meats, spiced with poison; or thy wines, drugged with death? Thou must swear to me, that thou wilt never attempt against me the treasons which thou hast practised upon my friends." The enchantress, won by the terror of his threats, or by the violence of that new love which she felt kindling in her veins for him, swore by Styx, the great oath of the gods, that she meditated no injury to him. Then Ulysses made show of gentler treatment, which gave her hopes of inspiring him with a passion equal to that which she felt. She called her handmaids, four that served her in chief, who were daughters to her silver fountains, to her sacred rivers, and to her consecrated woods, to deck her apartments, to spread rich carpets, and set out her silver tables with dishes of the purest gold, and meat as precious as that which the gods eat, to entertain her guest. One brought water to wash his feet, and one brought wine to chase away, with a refreshing sweetness, the sorrows that had come of late so thick upon him and hurt his noble mind. They strewed perfumes on his head, and after he had bathed in a bath of the choicest aromatics, they brought him rich and costly apparel to put on. Then he was conducted to a throne of massive silver, and a regale, fit for Jove when he banquets, was placed before him. But the feast which Ulysses desired was to see his friends (the partners

of his voyage) once more in the shapes of men; and the food which could give him nourishment must be taken in at his eyes. Because he missed this sight, he sat melancholy and thoughtful, and would taste of none of the rich delicacies placed before him. Which when Circe noted, she easily divined the cause of his sadness, and leaving the seat in which she sat throned, went to her sty, and led abroad his men, who came in like swine, and filled the ample hall, where Ulysses sat, with gruntings. Hardly had he time to let his sad eye run over their altered forms and brutal metamorphosis, when with an ointment which she smeared over them, suddenly their bristles fell off, and they started up in their own shapes men as before. They knew their leader again, and clung about him with joy of their late restoration, and some shame for their late change; and wept so loud, blubbering out their joy in broken accents, that the palace was filled with a sound of pleasing mourning, and the witch herself, great Circe, was not unmoved at the sight. To make her atonement complete, she sent for the remnant of Ulysses' men who stayed behind at the ship, giving up their great commander for lost; who when they came, and saw him again alive, circled with their fellows, no expression can tell what joy they felt; they even cried out with rapture, and to have seen their frantic expressions of mirth, a man might have supposed that they were just in sight of their country earth, the cliffs of rocky Ithaca. Only Eurylochus

would hardly be persuaded to enter that palace of wonders, for he remembered with a kind of horror how his companions had vanished from his sight.

Then great Circe spake, and gave order, that there should be no more sadness among them, nor remembering of past sufferings. For as yet they fared like men that are exiles from their country, and if a gleam of mirth shot among them, it was suddenly quenched with the thought of their helpless and homeless condition. Her kind persuasions wrought upon Ulysses and the rest, that they spent twelve months in all manner of delight with her in her palace. For Circe was a powerful magician, and could command the moon from her sphere, or unroot the solid oak from its place to make it dance for their diversion, and by the help of her illusions she could vary the taste of pleasures, and contrive delights, recreations, and jolly pastimes, to "fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a delightful dream."

At length Ulysses awoke from the trance of the faculties into which her charms had thrown him, and the thought of home returned with tenfold vigour to goad and sting him; that home where he had left his virtuous wife Penelope, and his young son Telemachus. One day when Circe had been lavish of her caresses, and was in her kindest humour, he moved to her subtly, and as it were afar off, the question of his home-return; to which she answered firmly, "O Ulysses, it is not in my power to detain

one whom the gods have destined to further trials. But leaving me, before you pursue your journey home, you must visit the house of Hades, or Death, to consult the shade of Tiresias the Theban prophet; to whom alone, of all the dead, Proserpine, queen of hell, has committed the secret of future events: it is he that must inform you whether you shall ever see again your wife and country." "O Circe," he cried; "that is impossible: who shall steer my course to Pluto's kingdom? Never ship had strength to make that voyage." "Seek no guide," she replied; "but raise you your mast, and hoist your white sails, and sit in your ship in peace: the north wind shall waft you through the seas, till you shall cross the expanse of the ocean, and come to where grow the poplar groves, and willows pale, of Proserpine: where Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus and Acheron mingle their waves. Cocytus is an arm of Styx, the forgetful river. Here dig a pit, and make it a cubit broad and a cubit long, and pour in milk, and honey, and wine, and the blood of a ram, and the blood of a black ewe, and turn away thy face while thou pourest in, and the dead shall come flocking to taste the milk and the blood; but suffer none to approach thy offering till thou hast inquired of Tiresias all which thou wishest to know."

He did as great Circe had appointed. He raised his mast, and hoisted his white sails, and sat in his ship in peace. The north wind wafted him through the seas, till he crossed the ocean, and came to the

sacred woods of Proserpine. He stood at the confluence of the three floods, and digged a pit, as she had given directions, and poured in his offering; the blood of a ram, and the blood of a black ewe, milk, and honey, and wine; and the dead came to his banquet: aged men, and women, and youths, and children who died in infancy. But none of them would he suffer to approach, and dip their thin lips in the offering, till Tiresias was served, not though his own mother was among the number, whom now for the first time he knew to be dead, for he had left her living when he went to Troy, and she had died since his departure, and the tidings never reached him: though it irked his soul to use constraint upon her, yet in compliance with the injunction of great Circe, he forced her to retire along with the other ghosts. Then Tiresias, who bore a golden sceptre, came and lapped of the offering, and immediately he knew Ulysses, and began to prophesy: *he denounced woe to Ulysses, woe, woe, and many sufferings, through the anger of Neptune for the putting out of the eye of the sea-god's son. Yet there was safety after suffering, if they could abstain from slaughtering the oxen of the Sun after they landed in the Triangular island. For Ulysses, the gods had destined him from a king to become a beggar, and to perish by his own guests, unless he slew those who knew him not.*

This prophecy, ambiguously delivered, was all that Tiresias was empowered to unfold, or else there was no longer place for him; for now the souls of the

other dead came flocking in such numbers, tumultuously demanding the blood, that freezing horror seized the limbs of the living Ulysses, to see so many, and all dead, and he the only one alive in that region. Now his mother came and lapped the blood, without restraint from her son, and now she knew him to be her son, and inquired of him why he had come alive to their comfortless habitations. And she said, that affliction for Ulysses' long absence had preyed upon her spirits, and brought her to the grave.

Ulysses' soul melted at her moving narration, and forgetting the state of the dead, and that the airy texture of disembodied spirits does not admit of the embraces of flesh and blood, he threw his arms about her to clasp her: the poor ghost melted from his embrace, and looking mournfully upon him vanished away.

Then saw he other females.—Tyro, who when she lived was the paramour of Neptune, and by him had Pelias and Neleus. Antiope, who bore two like sons to Jove, Amphion and Zethus, founders of Thebes. Alcmena, the mother of Hercules, with her fair daughter, afterwards her daughter-in-law, Megara. There also Ulysses saw Jocasta, the unfortunate mother and wife of Œdipus; who ignorant of kin wedded with her son, and when she had discovered the unnatural alliance, for shame and grief hanged herself. He continued to drag a wretched life above the earth, haunted by the dreadful Furies.—

There was Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, the mother of the beautiful Helen, and of the two brave brothers, Castor and Pollux, who obtained this grace from Jove, that being dead, they should enjoy life alternately, living in pleasant places under the earth. For Pollux had prayed that his brother Castor, who was subject to death, as the son of Tyndarus, should partake of his own immortality, which he derived from an immortal sire: this the Fates denied; therefore Pollux was permitted to divide his immortality with his brother Castor, dying and living alternately.—There was Iphimedeia, who bore two sons to Neptune that were giants, Otus and Ephialtes: Earth in her prodigality never nourished bodies to such portentous size and beauty as these two children were of, except Orion. At nine years old they had imaginations of climbing to heaven to see what the gods were doing; they thought to make stairs of mountains, and were for piling Ossa upon Olympus, and setting Pelion upon that, and had perhaps performed it, if they had lived till they were striplings; but they were cut off by death in the infancy of their ambitious project.—Phædra was there, and Procris, and Ariadne, mournful for Theseus' desertion, and Mæra, and Clymene, and Eryphile, who preferred gold before wedlock faith.

But now came a mournful ghost, that late was Agamemnon, son of Atreus, the mighty leader of all the host of Greece and their confederate kings that warred against Troy. He came with the rest to

sip a little of the blood at that uncomfortable banquet. Ulysses was moved with compassion to see him among them, and asked him what untimely fate had brought him there, if storms had overwhelmed him coming from Troy, or if he had perished in some mutiny by his own soldiers at a division of the prey.

"By none of these," he replied, "did I come to my death, but slain at a banquet to which I was invited by Ægisthus after my return home. He conspiring with my adulterous wife, they laid a scheme for my destruction, training me forth to a banquet as an ox goes to the slaughter, and there surrounding me they slew me with all my friends about me.

"Clytemnestra, my wicked wife, forgetting the vows which she swore to me in wedlock, would not lend a hand to close my eyes in death. But nothing is so heaped with impieties as such a woman, who would kill her spouse that married her a maid. When I brought her home to my house a bride, I hoped in my heart that she would be loving to me and to my children. Now, her black treacheries have cast a foul aspersion on her whole sex. Blest husbands will have their loving wives in suspicion for her bad deeds."

"Alas!" said Ulysses, "there seems to be a fatality in your royal house of Atreus, and that they are hated of Jove for their wives. For Helen's sake, your brother Menelaus' wife, what multitudes fell in the wars of Troy!"

Agamemnon replied, "For this cause be not thou

more kind than wise to any woman. Let not thy words express to her at any time all that is in thy mind, keep still some secrets to thyself. But thou by any bloody contrivances of thy wife never need'st fear to fall. Exceeding wise she is, and to her wisdom she has a goodness as eminent: Icarius' daughter, Penelope the chaste: we left her a young bride when we parted from our wives to go to the wars, her first child suckling at her breast, the young Telemachus, whom you shall see grown up to manhood on your return, and he shall greet his father with befitting welcomes. My Orestes, my dear son, I shall never see again. His mother has deprived his father of the sight of him, and perhaps will slay him as she slew his sire. It is now no world to trust a woman in.—But what says fame? is my son yet alive? lives he in Orchomen, or in Pylus, or is he resident in Sparta, in his uncle's court? as yet, I see, divine Orestes is not here with me."

To this Ulysses replied that he had received no certain tidings where Orestes abode, only some uncertain rumours which he could not report for truth.

While they held this sad conference, with kind tears striving to render unkind fortunes more palatable, the soul of great Achilles joined them. "What desperate adventure has brought Ulysses to these regions," said Achilles, "to see the end of dead men and their foolish shades?"

Ulysses answered him that he had come to consult Tiresias respecting his voyage home. "But thou,

O son of Thetis," said he, "why dost thou disparage the state of the dead? seeing that as alive thou didst surpass all men in glory, thou must needs retain thy pre-eminence here below: so great Achilles triumphs over death."

But Achilles made reply that he had much rather be a peasant-slave upon the earth than reign over all the dead. So much did the inactivity and slothful condition of that state displease his unquenchable and restless spirit. Only he inquired of Ulysses if his father Peleus were living, and how his son Neoptolemus conducted himself.

Of Peleus Ulysses could tell him nothing: but of Neoptolemus he thus bore witness: "From Scyros I convoyed your son by sea to the Greeks, where I can speak of him, for I knew him. He was chief in council and in the field. When any question was proposed, so quick was his conceit in the forward apprehension of any case, that he ever spoke first, and was heard with more attention than the older heads. Only myself and aged Nestor could compare with him in giving advice. In battle I cannot speak his praise, unless I could count all that fell by his sword. I will only mention one instance of his manhood. When we sat hid in the belly of the wooden horse, in the ambush which deceived the Trojans to their destruction, I, who had the management of that stratagem, still shifted my place from side to side to note the behaviour of our men. In some I marked their hearts trembling, through all the pains

which they took to appear valiant, and in others tears, that in spite of manly courage would gush forth. And to say truth, it was an adventure of high enterprise, and as perilous a stake as was ever played in war's game. But in him I could not observe the least sign of weakness, no tears nor tremblings, but his hand still on his good sword, and ever urging me to set open the machine and let us out before the time was come for doing it; and when we sallied out he was still first in that fierce destruction and bloody midnight desolation of King Priam's city."

This made the soul of Achilles to tread a swifter pace, with high-raised feet, as he vanished away, for the joy which he took in his son being applauded by Ulysses.

A sad shade stalked by, which Ulysses knew to be the ghost of Ajax, his opponent, when living, in that famous dispute about the right of succeeding to the arms of the deceased Achilles. They being adjudged by the Greeks to Ulysses, as the prize of wisdom above bodily strength, the noble Ajax in despite went mad, and slew himself. The sight of his rival turned to a shade by his dispute, so subdued the passion of emulation in Ulysses, that for his sake he wished that judgment in that controversy had been given against himself, rather than so illustrious a chief should have perished for the desire of those arms, which his prowess (second only to Achilles in fight) so eminently had deserved. "Ajax," he cried, "all the Greeks mourn for thee

as much as they lamented for Achilles. Let not thy wrath burn for ever, great son of Telamon. Ulysses seeks peace with thee, and will make any atonement to thee that can appease thy hurt spirit." But the shade stalked on, and would not exchange a word with Ulysses, though he prayed it with many tears and many earnest entreaties. "He might have spoke to me," said Ulysses, "since I spoke to him; but I see the resentments of the dead are eternal."

Then Ulysses saw a throne, on which was placed a judge distributing sentence. He that sat on the throne was Minos, and he was dealing out just judgments to the dead. He it is that assigns them their place in bliss or woe.

Then came by a thundering ghost, the large-limbed Orion, the mighty hunter, who was hunting there the ghosts of the beasts which he had slaughtered in desert hills upon the earth; for the dead delight in the occupations which pleased them in the time of their living upon the earth.

There was Tityus suffering eternal pains because he had sought to violate the honour of Latona as she passed from Pytho into Panopeus. Two vultures sat perpetually preying upon his liver with their crooked beaks, which as fast as they devoured is for ever renewed; nor can he fray them away with his great hands.

There was Tantalus, plagued for his great sins, standing up to the chin in water, which he can never taste, but still as he bows his head, thinking

to quench his burning thirst, instead of water he licks up unsavoury dust. All fruits pleasant to the sight, and of delicious flavour, hang in ripe clusters about his head, seeming as though they offered themselves to be plucked by him; but when he reaches out his hand, some wind carries them far out of his sight into the clouds, so he is starved in the midst of plenty by the righteous doom of Jove, in memory of that inhuman banquet at which the sun turned pale, when the unnatural father served up the limbs of his little son in a dish, as meat for his divine guests.

There was Sisyphus, that sees no end to his labours. His punishment is, to be for ever rolling up a vast stone to the top of a mountain, which when it gets to the top, falls down with a crushing weight, and all his work is to be begun again. He was bathed all over in sweat, that reeked out a smoke which covered his head like a mist. His crime had been the revealing of state secrets.

There Ulysses saw Hercules: not that Hercules who enjoys immortal life in heaven among the gods, and is married to Hebe or Youth, but his shadow which remains below. About him the dead flocked as thick as bats, hovering around, and cuffing at his head: he stands with his dreadful bow, ever in the act to shoot.

There also might Ulysses have seen and spoken with the shades of Theseus, and Pirithous, and the old heroes; but he had conversed enough with hor-

rors, therefore, covering his face with his hands, that he might see no more spectres, he resumed his seat in his ship, and pushed off. The barque moved of itself without the help of any oar, and soon brought him out of the regions of death into the cheerful quarters of the living, and to the island of Æea, whence he had set forth.

CHAPTER III

The song of the Sirens—Scylla and Charybdis—The oxen of the Sun—The judgment—The crew killed by lightning

"UNHAPPY man, who at thy birth wast appointed twice to die! others shall die once: but thou, besides that death that remains for thee, common to all men, hast in thy lifetime visited the shades of death. Thee Scylla, thee Charybdis, expect. Thee the deathful Sirens lie in wait for, that taint the minds of whoever listen to them with their sweet singing. Whosoever shall but hear the call of any Siren, he will so despise both wife and children through their sorceries, that the stream of his affection never again shall set homewards, nor shall he take joy in wife or children thereafter, or they in him."

With these prophetic greetings great Circe met Ulysses on his return. He besought her to instruct him in the nature of the Sirens, and by what method their baneful allurements were to be resisted.

"They are sisters three," she replied, "that sit in a mead (by which your ship must needs pass) circled with dead men's bones. These are the bones of men whom they have slain, after with fawning invitements they have enticed them into their fen. Yet such is the celestial harmony of their voice accompanying the persuasive magic of their words, that knowing this, you shall not be able to withstand their enticements. Therefore when you are to sail by them, you shall stop the ears of your companions with wax, that they may hear no note of that dangerous music; but for yourself, that you may hear, and yet live, give them strict command to bind you hand and foot to the mast, and in no case to set you free, till you are out of the danger of the temptation, though you should entreat it, and implore it ever so much, but to bind you rather the more for your requesting to be loosed. So shall you escape that snare."

Ulysses then prayed her that she would inform him what Scylla and Charybdis were, which she had taught him by name to fear. She replied: "Sailing from Æea to Trinacria, you must pass at an equal distance between two fatal rocks. Incline never so little either to the one side or the other, and your ship must meet with certain destruction. No vessel ever yet tried that pass without being lost, but the Argo, which owed her safety to the sacred freight she bore, the fleece of the golden-backed ram, which could not perish. The biggest of these rocks which

you shall come to, Scylla hath in charge. There, in a deep whirlpool at the foot of the rock, the abhorred monster shrouds her face; who if she were to show her full form, no eye of man or god could endure the sight; thence she stretches out all her six long necks peering and diving to suck up fish, dolphins, dog-fish, and whales, whole ships, and their men, whatever comes within her raging gulf. The other rock is lesser, and of less ominous aspect; but there dreadful Charybdis sits, supping the black deeps. Thrice a day she drinks her pits dry, and thrice a day again she belches them all up: but when she is drinking, come not nigh, for being once caught, the force of Neptune cannot redeem you from her swallow. Better trust to Scylla, for she will but have for her six necks, six men: Charybdis in her insatiate draught will ask all."

Then Ulysses inquired, in case he should escape Charybdis, whether he might not assail that other monster with his sword: to which she replied that he must not think that he had an enemy subject to death, or wounds, to contend with: for Scylla could never die. Therefore, his best safety was in flight, and to invoke none of the gods but Cratis, who is Scylla's mother, and might perhaps forbid her daughter to devour them. For his conduct after he arrived at Trinacria she referred him to the admonitions which had been given him by Tiresias.

Ulysses having communicated her instructions, as far as related to the Sirens, to his companions, who

had not been present at that interview; but concealing from them the rest, as he had done the terrible predictions of Tiresias, that they might not be deterred by fear from pursuing their voyage: the time for departure being come, they set their sails, and took a final leave of great Circe; who by her art calmed the heavens, and gave them smooth seas, and a right fore wind (the seaman's friend) to bear them on their way to Ithaca.

They had not sailed past a hundred leagues before the breeze which Circe had lent them suddenly stopped. It was stricken dead. All the sea lay in prostrate slumber. Not a gasp of air could be felt. The ship stood still. Ulysses guessed that the island of the Sirens was not far off, and that they had charmed the air so with their devilish singing. Therefore he made him cakes of wax, as Circe had instructed him, and stopped the ears of his men with them: then causing himself to be bound hand and foot, he commanded the rowers to ply their oars and row as fast as speed could carry them past that fatal shore. They soon came within sight of the Sirens, who sang in Ulysses' hearing:

Come here, thou, worthy of a world of praise,
That dost so high the Grecian glory raise;
Ulysses! stay thy ship; and that song hear
That none pass'd ever, but it bent his ear,
But left him ravish'd, and instructed more
By us, than any, ever heard before.
For we know all things, whatsoever were
In wide Troy labour'd: whatsoever there

The Grecians and the Trojans both sustain'd:
By those high issues that the gods ordain'd:
And whatsoever all the earth can show
To inform a knowledge of desert, we know.

These were the words, but the celestial harmony of the voices which sang them no tongue can describe: it took the ear of Ulysses with ravishment. He would have broke his bonds to rush after them; and threatened, wept, sued, entreated, commanded, crying out with tears and passionate imprecations, conjuring his men by all the ties of perils past which they had endured in common, by fellowship and love, and the authority which he retained among them, to let him loose; but at no rate would they obey him. And still the Sirens sang. Ulysses made signs, motions, gestures, promising mountains of gold if they would set him free; but their oars only moved faster. And still the Sirens sung. And still the more he adjured them to set him free, the faster with cords and ropes they bound him; till they were quite out of hearing of the Sirens' notes, whose effect great Circe had so truly predicted. And well she might speak of them, for often she had joined her own enchanting voice to theirs, while she has sat in the flowery meads, mingled with the Sirens and the Water Nymphs, gathering their potent herbs and drugs of magic quality: their singing altogether has made the gods stoop, and "heaven drowsy with the harmony."

Escaped that peril, they had not sailed yet an

hundred leagues farther, when they heard a roar afar off, which Ulysses knew to be the barking of Scylla's dogs, which surround her waist, and bark incessantly. Coming nearer they beheld a smoke ascend, with a horrid murmur, which arose from that other whirlpool, to which they made nigher approaches than to Scylla. Through the furious eddy, which is in that place, the ship stood still as a stone, for there was no man to lend his hand to an oar, the dismal roar of Scylla's dogs at a distance, and the nearer clamours of Charybdis, where everything made an echo, quite taking from them the power of exertion. Ulysses went up and down encouraging his men, one by one, giving them good words, telling them that they were in greater perils when they were blocked up in the Cyclop's cave, yet, heaven assisting his counsels, he had delivered them out of that extremity. That he could not believe but they remembered it; and wished them to give the same trust to the same care which he had now for their welfare. That they must exert all the strength and wit which they had, and cry if Jove would not grant them an escape even out of this peril. In particular he cheered up the pilot who sat at the helm, and told him that he must show more firmness than other men, as he had more trust committed to him, and had the sole management by his skill of the vessel in which all their safeties were embarked. That a rock lay hid within those boiling whirlpools which he saw, on the outside of which he must

steer, if he would avoid his own destruction, and the destruction of them all.

They heard him, and like men took to the oars; but little knew what opposite danger, in shunning that rock, they must be thrown upon. For Ulysses had concealed from them the wounds, never to be healed, which Scylla was to open: their terror would else have robbed them all of all care to steer, or move an oar, and have made them hide under the hatches for fear of seeing her, where he and they must have died an idle death. But even then he forgot the precautions which Circe had given him to prevent harm to his person; who had willed him not to arm, or show himself once to Scylla: but disdaining not to venture life for his brave companions, he could not contain, but armed in all points, and taking a lance in either hand, he went up to the fore deck, and looked when Scylla would appear.

She did not show herself as yet, and still the vessel steered closer by her rock, as it sought to shun that other more dreaded: for they saw how horribly Charybdis' black throat drew into her all the whirling deep, which she disgorged again, that all about her boiled like a kettle, and the rock roared with troubled waters; which when she supped in again, all the bottom turned up, and disclosed far under shore the swart sands naked, whose whole stern sight frayed the startled blood from their faces, and made Ulysses turn his to view the wonder of whirlpools. Which when Scylla saw, from out her

black den, she darted out her six long necks, and swoopt up as many of his friends: whose cries Ulysses heard, and saw them too late, with their heels turned up, and their hands thrown to him for succour, who had been their help in all extremities, but could not deliver them now; and he heard them shriek out, as she tore them, and to the last they continued to throw their hands out to him for sweet life. In all his sufferings he never had beheld a sight so full of miseries.

Escaped from Scylla and Charybdis, but with a diminished crew, Ulysses, and the sad remains of his followers, reached the Trinacrian shore. Here landing, he beheld oxen grazing of such surpassing size and beauty, that both from them, and from the shape of the island (having three promontories jutting into the sea) he judged rightly that he was come to the Triangular island, and the oxen of the Sun, of which Tiresias had forewarned him.

So great was his terror lest through his own fault, or that of his men, any violence or profanation should be offered to the holy oxen, that even then, tired as they were with the perils and fatigues of the day past, and unable to stir an oar, or use any exertion, and though night was fast coming on, he would have them re-embark immediately, and make the best of their way from that dangerous station; but his men with one voice resolutely opposed it, and even the too cautious Eurylochus himself withstood the proposal; so much did the temptation of a little

ease and refreshment (ease tenfold sweet after such labours) prevail over the sagest counsels, and the apprehension of certain evil outweigh the prospect of contingent danger. They expostulated, that the nerves of Ulysses seemed to be made of steel, and his limbs not liable to lassitude like other men's; that waking or sleeping seemed indifferent to him; but that they were men, not gods, and felt the common appetites for food and sleep. That in the night-time all the winds most destructive to ships are generated. That black night still required to be served with meat, and sleep, and quiet havens and ease. That the best sacrifice to the sea was in the morning. With such sailor-like sayings and mutinous arguments, which the majority have always ready to justify disobedience to their betters, they forced Ulysses to comply with their requisition, and against his will to take up his night-quarters on shore. But he first exacted from them an oath that they would neither maim nor kill any of the cattle which they saw grazing, but content themselves with such food as Circe had stowed their vessel with when they parted from Æea. This they man by man severally promised, imprecating the heaviest curses on whoever should break it; and mooring their bark within a creek, they went to supper, contenting themselves that night with such food as Circe had given them, not without many sad thoughts of their friends whom Scylla had devoured, the grief of which kept them great part of the night waking.

In the morning Ulysses urged them again to a religious observance of the oath that they had sworn, not in any case to attempt the blood of those fair herds which they saw grazing, but to content themselves with the ship's food; for the god who owned those cattle sees and hears all.

They faithfully obeyed, and remained in that good mind for a month, during which they were confined to that station by contrary winds, till all the wine and the bread were gone, which they had brought with them. When their victuals were gone, necessity compelled them to stray in quest of whatever fish or fowl they could snare, which that coast did not yield in any great abundance. Then Ulysses prayed to all the gods that dwelt in bountiful heaven, that they would be pleased to yield them some means to stay their hunger without having recourse to profane and forbidden violations: but the ears of heaven seemed to be shut, or some god incensed plotted his ruin; for at mid-day, when he should chiefly have been vigilant and watchful to prevent mischief, a deep sleep fell upon the eyes of Ulysses, during which he lay totally insensible of all that passed in the world, and what his friends or what his enemies might do, for his welfare or destruction. Then Eurylochus took his advantage. He was the man of most authority with them after Ulysses. He represented to them all the misery of their condition; how that every death is hateful and grievous to mortality, but that of all deaths famine is attended with the

most painful, loathsome, and humiliating circumstances; that the subsistence which they could hope to draw from fowling or fishing was too precarious to be depended upon; that there did not seem to be any chance of the winds changing to favour their escape, but that they must inevitably stay there and perish, if they let an irrational superstition deter them from the means which nature offered to their hands; that Ulysses might be deceived in his belief that these oxen had any sacred qualities above other oxen; and even admitting that they were the property of the god of the Sun, as he said they were, the Sun did neither eat nor drink, and the gods were best served not by a scrupulous conscience, but by a thankful heart, which took freely what they as freely offered: with these and such-like persuasions he prevailed on his half-famished and half-mutinous companions, to begin the impious violation of their oath by the slaughter of seven of the fairest of these oxen which were grazing. Part they roasted and eat, and part they offered in sacrifice to the gods, particularly to Apollo, god of the Sun, vowing to build a temple to his godhead, when they should arrive in Ithaca, and deck it with magnificent and numerous gifts: Vain men! and superstition worse than that which they so lately derided! to imagine that prospective penitence can excuse a present violation of duty, and that the pure natures of the heavenly powers will admit of compromise or dispensation for sin.

But to their feast they fell, dividing the roasted portions of the flesh, savoury and pleasant meat to them, but a sad sight to the eyes and a savour of death in the nostrils of the waking Ulysses; who just woke in time to witness, but not soon enough to prevent, their rash and sacrilegious banquet. He had scarce time to ask what great mischief was this which they had done unto him; when behold, a prodigy! the ox-hides which they had stripped began to creep, as if they had life; and the roasted flesh bellowed as the ox used to do when he was living. The hair of Ulysses stood up on end with affright at these omens; but his companions, like men whom the gods had infatuated to their destruction, persisted in their horrible banquet.

The Sun from its burning chariot saw how Ulysses' men had slain his oxen, and he cried to his father Jove: "Revenge me upon these impious men who have slain my oxen, which it did me good to look upon when I walked my heavenly round. In all my daily course I never saw such bright and beautiful creatures as those my oxen were." The father promised that ample retribution should be taken of those accursed men: which was fulfilled shortly after, when they took their leaves of the fatal island.

Six days they feasted in spite of the signs of heaven, and on the seventh, the wind changing, they set their sails and left the island; and their hearts were cheerful with the banquets they had held; all

but the heart of Ulysses, which sank within him, as with wet eyes he beheld his friends, and gave them for lost, as men devoted to divine vengeance. Which soon overtook them: for they had not gone many leagues before a dreadful tempest arose, which burst their cables; down came their mast, crushing the skull of the pilot in its fall; off he fell from the stern into the water, and the bark wanting his management drove along at the wind's mercy: thunders roared, and terrible lightnings of Jove came down; first a bolt struck Eurylochus, then another, and then another, till all the crew were killed, and their bodies swam about like sea-mews; and the ship was split in pieces: only Ulysses survived; and he had no hope of safety but in tying himself to the mast, where he sat riding upon the waves, like one that in no extremity would yield to fortune. Nine days was he floating about with all the motions of the sea, with no other support than the slender mast under him, till the tenth night cast him, all spent and weary with toil, upon the friendly shores of the island Ogygia.

CHAPTER IV

The island of Calypso—Immortality refused

HENCEFORTH the adventures of the single Ulysses must be pursued. Of all those faithful partakers of his toil, who with him left Asia, laden

with the spoils of Troy, now not one remains, but all a prey to the remorseless waves, and food for some great fish; their gallant navy reduced to one ship, and that finally swallowed up and lost. Where now are all their anxious thoughts of home? that perseverance with which they went through the severest sufferings and the hardest labours to which poor seafarers were ever exposed, that their toils at last might be crowned with the sight of their native shores and wives at Ithaca!—Ulysses is now in the isle Ogygia; called the Delightful Island. The poor shipwrecked chief, the slave of all the elements, is once again raised by the caprice of fortune into a shadow of prosperity. He that was cast naked upon the shore, bereft of all his companions, has now a goddess to attend upon him, and his companions are the nymphs which never die.—Who has not heard of Calypso? her grove crowned with alders and poplars? her grotto, against which the luxuriant vine laid forth his purple grapes? her ever new delights, crystal fountains, running brooks, meadows flowering with sweet balm-gentle and with violet: blue violets which, like veins, enamelled the smooth breasts of each fragrant mead! It were useless to describe over again what has been so well told already: or to relate those soft arts of courtship which the goddess used to detain Ulysses; the same in kind which she afterwards practised upon his less wary son, whom Minerva, in the shape of Mentor, hardly preserved from her snares, when they came

to the Delightful Island together in search of the scarce departed Ulysses.

A memorable example of married love, and a worthy instance how dear to every good man his country is, was exhibited by Ulysses. If Circe loved him sincerely, Calypso loves him with tenfold more warmth and passion: she can deny him nothing but his departure; she offers him everything, even to a participation of her immortality; if he will stay and share in her pleasures he shall never die. But death with glory has greater charms for a mind heroic than a life that shall never die with shame; and when he pledged his vows to his Penelope, he reserved no stipulation that he would forsake her whenever a goddess should think him worthy of her bed, but they had sworn to live and grow old together: and he would not survive her if he could, nor meanly share in immortality itself, from which she was excluded.

These thoughts kept him pensive and melancholy in the midst of pleasure. His heart was on the seas, making voyages to Ithaca. Twelve months had worn away, when Minerva from heaven saw her favourite, how he sat still pining on the sea shores (his daily custom), wishing for a ship to carry him home. She (who is wisdom herself) was indignant that so wise and brave a man as Ulysses should be held in effeminate bondage by an unworthy goddess: and at her request, her father Jove ordered Mercury to go down to the earth to command Calypso to dismiss

her guest. The divine messenger tied fast to his feet his winged shoes, which bear him over land and seas, and took in his hand his golden rod, the ensign of his authority. Then wheeling in many an airy round, he stayed not till he alighted on the firm top of the mountain Pieria: thence he fetched a second circuit over the seas, kissing the waves in his flight with his feet, as light as any sea-mew fishing dips her wings, till he touched the isle Ogygia, and soared up from the blue sea to the grotto of the goddess, to whom his errand was ordained.

His message struck a horror, checked by love, through all the faculties of Calypso. She replied to it, incensed: "You gods are insatiate, past all that live, in all things which you affect; which makes you so envious and grudging. It afflicts you to the heart, when any goddess seeks the love of a mortal man in marriage, though you yourselves without scruple link yourselves to women of the earth. So it fared with you, when the delicious-fingered Morning shared Orion's bed; you could never satisfy your hate and your jealousy till you had incensed the chastity-loving dame, Diana, *who leads the precise life*, to come upon him by stealth in Ortygia, and pierce him through with her arrows. And when rich-haired Ceres gave the reins to her affections, and took Iasion (well worthy) to her arms, the secret was not so cunningly kept but Jove had soon notice of it, and the poor mortal paid for his felicity with death, struck through with lightnings. And now you

envy me the possession of a wretched man, whom tempests have cast upon my shores, making him lawfully mine; whose ship Jove rent in pieces with his hot thunderbolts, killing all his friends. Him I have preserved, loved, nourished, made him mine by protection, my creature, by every tie of gratitude mine; have vowed to make him deathless like myself; him you will take from me. But I know your power, and that it is vain for me to resist. Tell your king that I obey his mandates."

With an ill grace Calypso promised to fulfil the commands of Jove; and, Mercury departing, she went to find Ulysses, where he sat outside the grotto, not knowing of the heavenly message, drowned in discontent, not seeing any human probability of his ever returning home.

She said to him: "Unhappy man, no longer afflict yourself with pining after your country, but build you a ship, with which you may return home; since it is the will of the gods: who, doubtless, as they are greater in power than I, are greater in skill, and best can tell what is fittest for man. But I call the gods and my inward conscience, to witness, that I had no thought but what stood with thy safety, nor would have done or counselled anything against thy good. I persuaded thee to nothing which I should not have followed myself in thy extremity: for my mind is innocent and simple. O, if thou knewest what dreadful sufferings thou must yet endure before ever thou reachest thy native land, thou wouldest

not esteem so hardly of a goddess' offer to share her immortality with thee; nor, for a few years' enjoyment of a perishing Penelope, refuse an imperishable and never-dying life with Calypso."

He replied: "Ever-honoured, great Calypso, let it not displease thee, that I, a mortal man, desire to see and converse again with a wife that is mortal; human objects are best fitted to human infirmities. I well know how far in wisdom, in feature, in stature, proportion, beauty, in all the gifts of the mind, thou exceedest my Penelope: she a mortal, and subject to decay; thou immortal, ever growing, yet never old; yet in her sight all my desires terminate, all my wishes; in the sight of her, and of my country earth. If any god, envious of my return, shall lay his dreadful hand upon me as I pass the seas, I submit; for the same powers have given me a mind not to sink under oppression. In wars and waves my sufferings have not been small."

She heard his pleaded reasons, and of force she must assent; so to her nymphs she gave in charge from her sacred woods to cut down timber, to make Ulysses a ship. They obeyed, though in a work unsuitable to their soft fingers, yet to obedience no sacrifice is hard: and Ulysses busily bestirred himself, labouring far more hard than they, as was fitting, till twenty tall trees, driest and fittest for timber, were felled. Then like a skilful ship-wright he fell to joining the planks, using the plane, the axe, and the auger, with such expedition, that in

four days' time a ship was made, complete with all her decks, hatches, side-boards, yards. Calypso added linen for the sails, and tackling; and when she was finished, she was a goodly vessel for a man to sail in alone, or in company, over the wide seas. By the fifth morning she was launched; and Ulysses, furnished with store of provisions, rich garments, and gold and silver, given him by Calypso, took a last leave of her, and of her nymphs and of the isle Ogygia which had so befriended him.

CHAPTER V

The tempest—The sea-bird's gift—The escape by swimming—The sleep in the woods

AT the stern of his solitary ship Ulysses sat and steered right artfully. No sleep could seize his eyelids. He beheld the Pleiads, the Bear which is by some called the Wain, that moves round about Orion, and keeps still above the ocean, and the slow-setting sign Bootes, which some name the Waggoner. Seventeen days he held his course, and on the eighteenth the coast of Phæacia was in sight. The figure of the land, as seen from the sea, was pretty and circular, and looked something like a shield.

Neptune returning from visiting his favourite Æthiopians, from the mountains of the Solymi, descried Ulysses ploughing the waves, his domain.

The sight of the man he so much hated for Polyphemus' sake, his son, whose eye Ulysses had put out, set the god's heart on fire, and snatching into his hand his horrid sea-sceptre, the trident of his power, he smote the air and the sea, and conjured up all his black storms, calling down night from the cope of heaven and taking the earth into the sea, as it seemed, with clouds, through the darkness and indistinctness which prevailed, the billows rolling up before the fury of all the winds that contended together in their mighty sport.

Then the knees of Ulysses bent with fear, and then all his spirit was spent, and he wished that he had been among the number of his countrymen who fell before Troy, and had their funerals celebrated by all the Greeks, rather than to perish thus, where no man could mourn him or know him.

As he thought these melancholy thoughts, a huge wave took him and washed him overboard, ship and all upset amidst the billows, he struggling afar off, clinging to her stern broken off which he yet held, her mast cracking in two with the fury of that gust of mixed winds that struck it, sails and sail-yards fell into the deep, and he himself was long drowned under water, nor could get his head above, wave so met with wave, as if they strove which should depress him most, and the gorgeous garments given him by Calypso clung about him, and hindered his swimming; yet neither for this, nor for the overthrow of his ship, nor his own perilous condition,

would he give up his drenched vessel, but, wrestling with Neptune, got at length hold of her again, and then sat in her bulk, insulting over death, which he had escaped, and the salt waves which he gave the sea again to give to other men: his ship, striving to live, floated at random, cuffed from wave to wave, hurled to and fro by all the winds; now Boreas tossed it to Notus, Notus passed it to Eurus, and Eurus to the west wind, who kept up the horrid tennis.

Them in their mad sport Ino Leucothea beheld; Ino Leucothea, now a sea-goddess, but once a mortal and the daughter of Cadmus; she with pity beheld Ulysses the mark of their fierce contention, and rising from the waves alighted on the ship, in shape like to the sea-bird which is called a cormorant, and in her beak she held a wonderful girdle made of sea-weeds which grow at the bottom of the ocean, which she dropped at his feet, and the bird spake to Ulysses and counselled him not to trust any more to that fatal vessel against which god Neptune had levelled his furious wrath, nor to those ill-befriending garments which Calypso had given him, but to quit both it and them, and trust for his safety to swimming. "And here," said the seeming bird, "take this girdle and tie about your middle, which has virtue to protect the wearer at sea, and you shall safely reach the shore; but when you have landed cast it far from you back into the sea." He did as the sea-bird instructed him, he stripped himself

naked, and fastening the wondrous girdle about his middle, cast himself into the seas to swim. The bird dived past his sight into the fathomless abyss of the ocean.

Two days and two nights he spent in struggling with the waves, though sore buffeted and almost spent, never giving up himself for lost, such confidence he had in that charm which he wore about his middle, and in the words of that divine bird. But the third morning the winds grew calm, and all the heavens were clear. Then he saw himself nigh land, which he knew to be the coast of the Phæacians, a people good to strangers, and abounding in ships, by whose favour he doubted not that he should soon obtain a passage to his own country. And such joy he conceived in his heart, as good sons have that esteem their father's life dear, when long sickness has held him down to his bed, and wasted his body, and they see at length health return to the old man, with restored strength and spirits, in reward of their many prayers to the gods for his safety: so precious was the prospect of home-return to Ulysses, that he might restore health to his country (his better parent), that had long languished as full of distempers in his absence. And then for his own safety's sake he had joy to see the shores, the woods, so nigh and within his grasp as they seemed, and he laboured with all the might of hands and feet to reach with swimming that nigh-seeming land.

But when he approached near, a horrid sound of

a huge sea beating against rocks informed him that here was no place for landing, nor any harbour for man's resort, but through the weeds and the foam which the sea belched up against the land he could dimly discover the rugged shore all bristled with flints, and all that part of the coast one impending rock that seemed impossible to climb, and the water all about so deep, that not a sand was there for any tired foot to rest upon, and every moment he feared lest some wave more cruel than the rest should crush him against a cliff, rendering worse than vain all his landing: and should he swim to seek a more commodious haven farther on, he was fearful lest, weak and spent as he was, the winds would force him back a long way off into the main, where the terrible god Neptune, for wrath that he had so nearly escaped his power, having gotten him again into his domain, would send out some great whale (of which those seas breed a horrid number) to swallow him up alive; with such malignity he still pursued him.

While these thoughts distracted him with diversity of dangers, one bigger wave drove against a sharp rock his naked body, which it gashed and tore, and wanted little of breaking all his bones, so rude was the shock. But in this extremity she prompted him that never failed him at need. Minerva (who is wisdom itself) put it into his thoughts no longer to keep swimming off and on, as one dallying with danger, but boldly to force the shore that threatened him,

and to hug the rock that had torn him so rudely; which with both hands he clasped, wrestling with extremity, till the rage of that billow which had driven him upon it was past; but then again the rock drove back that wave so furiously, that it reft him of his hold, sucking him with it in his return, and the sharp rock (his cruel friend) to which he clinged for succour, rent the flesh so sore from his hands in parting, that he fell off, and could sustain no longer: quite under water he fell, and past the help of fate, there had the hapless Ulysses lost all portion that he had in this life, if Minerva had not prompted his wisdom in that peril to essay another course, and to explore some other shelter, ceasing to attempt that landing-place.

She guided his wearied and nigh-exhausted limbs to the mouth of the fair river Calliroe, which not far from thence disbursed its watery tribute to the ocean. Here the shores were easy and accessible, and the rocks, which rather adorned than defended its banks, so smooth, that they seemed polished of purpose to invite the landing of our sea-wanderer, and to atone for the uncourteous treatment which those less hospitable cliffs had afforded him. And the god of the river, as if in pity, stayed his current and smoothed his waters, to make his landing more easy; for sacred to the ever-living deities of the fresh waters, be they mountain-stream, river, or lake, is the cry of erring mortals that seek their aid, by reason that being inland-bred they partake more of

the gentle humanities of our nature than those marine deities, whom Neptune trains up in tempests in the unpitying recesses of his salt abyss.

So by the favour of the river's god Ulysses crept to land half-drowned; both his knees faltering, his strong hands falling down through weakness from the excessive toils he had endured, his cheek and nostrils flowing with froth of the sea-brine, much of which he had swallowed in that conflict, voice and breath spent, down he sank as in death. Dead weary he was. It seemed that the sea had soaked through his heart, and the pains he felt in all his veins were little less than those which one feels that has endured the torture of the rack. But when his spirits came a little to themselves, and his recollection by degrees began to return, he rose up, and unloosing from his waist the girdle or charm which that divine bird had given him, and remembering the charge which he had received with it, he flung it far from him into the river. Back it swam with the course of the ebbing stream till it reached the sea, where the fair hands of Ino Leucothea received it to keep it as a pledge of safety to any future shipwrecked mariner that like Ulysses should wander in those perilous waves.

Then he kissed the humble earth in token of safety, and on he went by the side of that pleasant river till he came where a thicker shade of rushes that grew on its banks seemed to point out the place where he might rest his sea-wearied limbs. And

here a fresh perplexity divided his mind, whether he should pass the night, which was coming on, in that place, where, though he feared no other enemies, the damps and frosts of the chill sea-air in that exposed situation might be death to him in his weak state; or whether he had better climb the next hill, and pierce the depth of some shady wood, in which he might find a warm and sheltered though insecure repose, subject to the approach of any wild beast that roamed that way. Best did this last course appear to him, though with some danger, as that which was more honourable and savoured more of strife and self-exertion, than to perish without a struggle, the passive victim of cold and the elements.

So he bent his course to the nearest woods, where, entering in, he found a thicket, mostly of wild olives and such low trees, yet growing so intertwined and knit together that the moist wind had not leave to play through their branches, nor the sun's scorching beams to pierce their recesses, nor any shower to beat through, they grew so thick and as it were folded each in the other; here creeping in, he made his bed of the leaves which were beginning to fall, of which was such abundance that two or three men might have spread them ample coverings, such as might shield them from the winter's rage, though the air breathed steel and blew as it would burst. Here creeping in, he heaped up store of leaves all about him, as a man would billets upon a winter fire, and lay down in the midst. Rich seed of virtue

lying hid in poor leaves! Here Minerva soon gave him sound sleep; and here all his long toils past seemed to be concluded and shut up within the little sphere of his refreshed and closed eyelids.

CHAPTER VI

The princess Nausicaa—The washing—The game with the ball —The Court of Phæacia and king Alcinous

MEANTIME Minerva, designing an interview between the king's daughter of that country and Ulysses when he should awake, went by night to the palace of king Alcinous, and stood at the bedside of the princess Nausicaa in the shape of one of her favourite attendants, and thus addressed the sleeping princess.

"Nausicaa, why do you lie sleeping here, and never bestow a thought upon your bridal ornaments, of which you have many and beautiful, laid up in your wardrobe against the day of your marriage, which cannot be far distant; when you shall have need of all, not only to deck your own person, but to give away in presents to the virgins that honouring you shall attend you to the temple? Your reputation stands much upon the timely care of these things; these things are they which fill father and reverend mother with delight. Let us arise betimes to wash your fair vestments of linen and silks in the river; and request your sire to lend you mules

and a coach, for your wardrobe is heavy, and the place where we must wash is distant, and besides it fits not a great princess like you to go so far on foot."

So saying she went away, and Nausicaa awoke, full of pleasing thoughts of her marriage, which the dream had told her was not far distant: and as soon as it was dawn, she arose and dressed herself and went to find her parents.

The queen her mother was already up, and seated among her maids, spinning at her wheel, as the fashion was in those primitive times, when great ladies did not disdain housewifery; and the king her father was preparing to go abroad at that early hour to council with his grave senate.

"My father," she said, "will you not order mules and a coach to be got ready, that I may go and wash, I and my maids, at the cisterns that stand without the city?"

"What washing does my daughter speak of?" said Alcinous.

"Mine and my brothers' garments," she replied, "that have contracted soil by this time with lying by so long in the wardrobe. Five sons have you, that are my brothers; two of them are married, and three are bachelors; these last it concerns to have their garments neat and unsoiled; it may advance their fortunes in marriage: and who but I their sister should have a care of these things? You yourself, my father, have need of the whitest apparel, when you go, as now, to the council."

She used this plea, modestly dissembling her care of her own nuptials to her father; who was not displeased at this instance of his daughter's discretion: for a seasonable care about marriage may be permitted to a young maiden, provided it to be accompanied with modesty and dutiful submission to her parents in the choice of her future husband: and there was no fear of Nausicaa choosing wrongly or improperly, for she was as wise as she was beautiful, and the best in all Phæacia were suitors to her for her love. So Alcinous readily gave consent that she should go, ordering mules and a coach to be prepared. And Nausicaa brought from her chamber all her vestments, and laid them up in the coach, and her mother placed bread and wine in the coach, and oil in a golden cruse, to soften the bright skins of Nausicaa and her maids when they came out of the river.

Nausicaa making her maids get up into the coach with her, lashed the mules, till they brought her to the cisterns which stood a little on the outside of the town, and were supplied with water from the river Calliroe.

There her attendants unyoked the mules, took out the clothes, and steeped them in the cisterns, washing them in several waters, and afterwards treading them clean with their feet, venturing wagers who should have done soonest and cleanest, and using many pretty pastimes to beguile their labour as young maids use, while the princess looked

on. When they had laid their clothes to dry, they fell to playing again, and Nausicaa joined them in a game with the ball, which is used in that country, which is performed by tossing the ball from hand to hand with great expedition, she who begins the pastime singing a song. It chanced that the princess, whose turn it became to toss the ball, sent it so far from its mark, that it fell beyond into one of the cisterns of the river: at which the whole company, in merry consternation, set up a shriek so loud as waked the sleeping Ulysses, who was taking his rest, after his long toils, in the woods not far distant from the place where these young maids had come to wash.

At the sound of female voices Ulysses crept forth from his retirement, making himself a covering with boughs and leaves as well as he could to shroud his nakedness. The sudden appearance of his weather-beaten and almost naked form so frighted the maidens that they scudded away into the woods and all about to hide themselves, only Minerva (who had brought about this interview to admirable purposes, by seemingly accidental means) put courage into the breast of Nausicaa, and she stayed where she was, and resolved to know what manner of man he was, and what was the occasion of his strange coming to them.

He not venturing (for delicacy) to approach and clasp her knees, as suppliants should, but standing far off, addressed this speech to the young princess.

"Before I presume rudely to press my petitions, I should first ask whether I am addressing a mortal woman, or one of the goddesses. If a goddess, you seem to me to be likest to Diana, the chaste huntress, the daughter of Jove. Like hers are your lineaments, your stature, your features, and air divine."

She making answer that she was no goddess, but a mortal maid, he continued:

"If a woman, thrice blessed are both the authors of your birth, thrice blessed are your brothers, who even to rapture must have joy in your perfections, to see you grown so like a young tree, and so graceful. But most blessed of all that breathe is he that has the gift to engage your young neck in the yoke of marriage. I never saw that man that was worthy of you. I never saw man or woman that at all parts equalled you. Lately at Delos (where I touched) I saw a young palm which grew beside Apollo's temple; it exceeded all the trees which ever I beheld for straightness and beauty: I can compare you only to that. A stupor past admiration strikes me, joined with fear, which keeps me back from approaching you, to embrace your knees. Nor is it strange; for one of freshest and firmest spirit would falter, approaching near to so bright an object: but I am one whom a cruel habit of calamity has prepared to receive strong impressions. Twenty days the unrelenting seas have tossed me up and down coming from Ogygia, and at length cast me shipwrecked last night upon your coast. I have seen no

man or woman since I landed but yourself. All that I crave is clothes, which you may spare me, and to be shown the way to some neighbouring town. The gods who have care of strangers, will requite you for these courtesies."

She, admiring to hear such complimentary words proceed out of the mouth of one whose outside looked so rough and unpromising, made answer: "Stranger, I discern neither sloth nor folly in you, and yet I see that you are poor and wretched; from which I gather that neither wisdom nor industry can secure felicity; only Jove bestows it upon whomsoever he pleases. He perhaps has reduced you to this plight. However, since your wanderings have brought you so near to our city, it lies in our duty to supply your wants. Clothes and what else a human hand should give to one so suppliant, and so tamed with calamity, you shall not want. We will show you our city and tell you the name of our people. This is the land of the Phæacians, of which my father Alcinous is king."

Then calling her attendants, who had dispersed on the first sight of Ulysses, she rebuked them for their fear, and said: "This man is no Cyclop, nor monster of sea or land, that you should fear him; but he seems manly, staid, and discreet, and though decayed in his outward appearance, yet he has the mind's riches,—wit and fortitude, in abundance. Show him the cisterns where he may wash him from the sea-weeds and foam that hang about him, and

let him have garments that fit him out of those which we have brought with us to the cisterns."

Ulysses, retiring a little out of sight, cleansed him in the cisterns from the soil and impurities with which the rocks and waves had covered all his body, and clothing himself with befitting raiment, which the princess' attendants had given him, he presented himself in more worthy shape to Nausicaa. She admired to see what a comely personage he was, now he was dressed in all parts; she thought him some king or hero: and secretly wished that the gods would be pleased to give her such a husband.

Then causing her attendants to yoke her mules, and lay up the vestments, which the sun's heat had sufficiently dried, in the coach, she ascended with her maids, and drove off to the palace; bidding Ulysses, as she departed, keep an eye upon the coach, and to follow it on foot at some distance: which she did, because if she had suffered him to have rode in the coach with her, it might have subjected her to some misconstructions of the common people, who are always ready to vilify and censure their betters, and to suspect that charity is not always pure charity, but that love or some sinister intention lies hid under its disguise. So discreet and attentive to appearance in all her actions was this admirable princess.

Ulysses, as he entered the city, wondered to see its magnificence, its markets, buildings, temples; its walls and rampires; its trade and resort of men; its

harbours for shipping, which is the strength of the Phæacian state. But when he approached the palace, and beheld its riches, the proportion of its architecture, its avenues, gardens, statues, fountains, he stood rapt in admiration, and almost forgot his own condition in surveying the flourishing estate of others: but recollecting himself, he passed on boldly into the inner apartment, where the king and queen were sitting at dinner with their peers; Nausicaa having prepared them for his approach.

To them, humbly kneeling, he made it his request, that since fortune had cast him naked upon their shores, they would take him into their protection, and grant him a conveyance by one of the ships, of which their great Phæacian state had such good store, to carry him to his own country. Having delivered his request, to grace it with more humility, he went and sat himself down upon the hearth among the ashes, as the custom was in those days when any would make a petition to the throne.

He seemed a petitioner of so great state and of so superior a deportment, that Alcinous himself arose to do him honour, and causing him to leave that abject station which he had assumed, placed him next to his throne, upon a chair of state, and thus he spake to his peers:

"Lords and counsellors of Phæacia, ye see this man, who he is we know not, that is come to us in the guise of a petitioner: he seems no mean one; but whoever he is, it is fit, since the gods have cast

him upon our protection, that we grant him the rites of hospitality while he stays with us, and at his departure a ship well manned to convey so worthy a personage as he seems to be in a manner suitable to his rank, to his own country."

This counsel the peers with one consent approved; and wine and meat being set before Ulysses, he ate and drank, and gave the gods thanks who had stirred up the royal bounty of Alcinous to aid him in that extremity. But not as yet did he reveal to the king and queen who he was, or whence he had come; only in brief terms he related his being cast upon their shores, his sleep in the woods, and his meeting with the princess Nausicaa: whose generosity, mingled with discretion, filled her parents with delight, as Ulysses in eloquent phrases adorned and commended her virtues. But Alcinous, humanely considering that the troubles which his guest had undergone required rest, as well as refreshment by food, dismissed him early in the evening to his chamber; where in a magnificent apartment Ulysses found a smoother bed, but not a sounder repose, than he had enjoyed the night before, sleeping upon leaves which he had scraped together in his necessity.

CHAPTER VII

The songs of Demodocus—The convoy home—The mariners transformed to stone—The young shepherd

WHEN it was day-light, Alcinous caused it to be proclaimed by the heralds about the town that there was come to the palace a stranger, ship-wrecked on their coast, that in mien and person resembled a god; and inviting all the chief people of the city to come and do honour to the stranger.

The palace was quickly filled with guests, old and young, for whose cheer, and to grace Ulysses more, Alcinous made a kingly feast, with banquetings and music. Then Ulysses being seated at a table next the king and queen, in all men's view; after they had feasted, Alcinous ordered Demodocus, the court-singer, to be called to sing some song of the deeds of heroes, to charm the ear of his guest. Demodocus came and reached his harp, where it hung between two pillars of silver; and then the blind singer, to whom, in recompense of his lost sight, the muses had given an inward discernment, a soul and a voice to excite the hearts of men and gods to delight, began in grave and solemn strains to sing the glories of men highliest famed. He chose a poem, whose subject was the stern strife stirred up between Ulysses and great Achilles, as at a banquet sacred to the gods in dreadful language they expressed their difference; while Agamemnon sat rejoiced in soul to hear those

Grecians jar: for the oracle in Pytho had told him that the period of their wars in Troy should then be, when the kings of Greece, anxious to arrive at the wished conclusion, should fall to strife, and contend which must end the war, force or stratagem.

This brave contention he expressed so to the life, in the very words which they both used in the quarrel, as brought tears into the eyes of Ulysses at the remembrance of past passages of his life, and he held his large purple weed before his face to conceal it. Then craving a cup of wine, he poured it out in secret libation to the gods, who had put into the mind of Demodocus unknowingly to do him so much honour. But when the moving poet began to tell of other occurrences where Ulysses had been present, the memory of his brave followers who had been with him in all difficulties, now swallowed up and lost in the ocean, and of those kings that had fought with him at Troy, some of whom were dead, some exiles like himself, forced itself so strongly upon his mind, that forgetful where he was, he sobbed outright with passion; which yet he restrained, but not so cunningly but Alcinous perceived it, and without taking notice of it to Ulysses, privately gave signs that Demodocus should cease from his singing.

Next followed dancing in the Phæacian fashion, when they would show respect to their guests; which was succeeded by trials of skill, games of strength, running, racing, hurling of the quoit, mock fights, hurling of the javelin, shooting with the bow; in

some of which Ulysses modestly challenging his entertainers, performed such feats of strength and prowess as gave the admiring Phæacians fresh reason to imagine that he was either some god or hero of the race of the gods.

These solemn shows and pageants in honour of his guest, king Alcinous continued for the space of many days, as if he could never be weary of showing courtesies to so worthy a stranger. In all this time he never asked him his name, nor sought to know more of him than he of his own accord disclosed: till on a day as they were seated feasting, after the feast was ended, Demodocus being called, as was the custom, to sing some grave matter, sang how Ulysses, on that night when Troy was fired, made dreadful proof of his valour, maintaining singly a combat against the whole household of Deiphobus, to which the divine expresser gave both act and passion, and breathed such a fire into Ulysses' deeds, that it inspired old death with life in the lively expressing of slaughters, and rendered life so sweet and passionate in the hearers, that all who heard felt it fleet from them in the narration: which made Ulysses even pity his own slaughterous deeds, and feel touches of remorse, to see how song can revive a dead man from the grave, yet no way can it defend a living man from death: and in imagination he underwent some part of death's horrors, and felt in his living body a taste of those dying pangs which he had dealt to others; that with the strong con-

ceit, tears (the true interpreters of unutterable emotion) stood in his eyes.

Which, king Alcinous noting, and that this was now the second time that he had perceived him to be moved at the mention of events touching the Trojan wars, he took occasion to ask whether his guest had lost any friend or kinsman at Troy, that Demodocus' singing had brought into his mind. Then Ulysses, drying the tears with his cloak, and observing that the eyes of all the company were upon him, desirous to give them satisfaction in what he could, and thinking this a fit time to reveal his true name and destination, spake as follows:

"The courtesies which ye all have shown me, and in particular yourself and princely daughter, O king Alcinous, demand from me that I should no longer keep you in ignorance of what or who I am; for to reserve any secret from you, who have with such openness of friendship embraced my love, would argue either a pusillanimous or an ungrateful mind in me. Know then that I am that *Ulysses*, of whom I perceive ye have heard something; who heretofore have filled the world with the renown of my policies. I am he by whose counsels, if Fame is to be believed at all, more than by the united valour of all the Grecians, Troy fell. I am that unhappy man whom the heavens and angry gods have conspired to keep an exile on the seas, wandering to seek my home which still flies from me. The land which I am in quest of is Ithaca; in whose ports some ship be-

longing to your navigation-famed Phæacian state may haply at some time have found a refuge from tempests. If ever you have experienced such kindness, requite it now, by granting to me, who am the king of that land, a passport to that land."

Admiration seized all the court of Alcinous to behold in their presence one of the number of those heroes who fought at Troy, whose divine story had been made known to them by songs and poems, but of the truth they had little known, or rather they had hitherto accounted those heroic exploits as fictions and exaggerations of poets; but having seen and made proof of the real Ulysses, they began to take those supposed inventions to be real verities, and the tale of Troy to be as true as it was delightful.

Then king Alcinous made answer: "Thrice fortunate ought we to esteem our lot, in having seen and conversed with a man of whom report hath spoken so loudly, but, as it seems, nothing beyond the truth. Though we could desire no felicity greater than to have you always among us, renowned Ulysses, yet your desire having been expressed so often and so deeply to return home, we can deny you nothing, though to our own loss. Our kingdom of Phæacia, as you know, is chiefly rich in shipping. In all parts of the world, where there are navigable seas, or ships can pass, our vessels will be found. You cannot name a coast to which they do not resort. Every rock and deep quicksand is known to them that lurks in the vast deep. They pass a bird in flight;

and with such unerring certainty they make to their destination, that some have said they have no need of pilot or rudder, but that they move instinctively, self-directed, and know the minds of their voyagers. Thus much, that you may not fear to trust yourself in one of our Phæacian ships. To-morrow if you please you shall launch forth. To-day spend with us in feasting: who never can do enough when the gods send such visitors."

Ulysses acknowledged king Alcinous' bounty; and while these two royal personages stood interchanging courteous expressions, the heart of the princess Nausicaa was overcome; she had been gazing attentively upon her father's guest as he delivered his speech, but when he came to that part where he declared himself to be Ulysses, she blessed herself and her fortune that in relieving a poor shipwrecked mariner, as he seemed no better, she had conferred a kindness on so divine a hero as he proved: and scarce waiting till her father had done speaking, with a cheerful countenance she addressed Ulysses, bidding him be cheerful, and when he returned home, as by her father's means she trusted he would shortly, sometimes to remember to whom he owed his life, and who met him in the woods by the river Calliroe.

"Fair flower of Phæacia," he replied, "so may all the gods bless me with the strife of joys in that desired day, whenever I shall see it, as I shall always acknowledge to be indebted to your fair hand for

the gift of life which I enjoy, and all the blessings which shall follow upon my home return. The gods give thee, Nausicaa, a princely husband; and from you two spring blessing to this state." So prayed Ulysses, his heart overflowing with admiration and grateful recollections of king Alcinous' daughter.

Then at the king's request he gave them a brief relation of all the adventures that had befallen him since he launched forth from Troy, during which the princess Nausicaa took great delight (as ladies are commonly taken with these kind of travellers' stories) to hear of the monster Polyphemus, of the men that devour each other in Læstrygonia, of the enchantress Circe, of Scylla, and the rest; to which she listened with a breathless attention, letting fall a shower of tears from her fair eyes every now and then, when Ulysses told of some more than usual distressful passage in his travels: and all the rest of his auditors, if they had before entertained a high respect for their guest, now felt their veneration increased tenfold, when they learnt from his own mouth what perils, what sufferings, what endurance, of evils beyond man's strength to support, this much-sustaining, almost heavenly man, by the greatness of his mind, and by his invincible courage, had struggled through.

The night was far spent before Ulysses had ended his narrative, and with wishful glances he cast his eyes towards the eastern parts, which the sun had begun to flecker with his first red: for on the mor-

row Alcinous had promised that a bark should be in readiness to convoy him to Ithaca.

In the morning a vessel well manned and appointed was waiting for him; into which the king and queen heaped presents of gold and silver, massy plate, apparel, armour, and whatsoever things of cost or rarity they judged would be most acceptable to their guest: and the sails being set, Ulysses embarking with expressions of regret took his leave of his royal entertainers, of the fair princess (who had been his first friend), and of the peers of Phæacia; who crowding down to the beach to have the last sight of their illustrious visitant, beheld the gallant ship with all her canvas spread, bounding and curveting over the waves, like a horse proud of his rider; or as if she knew that in her capacious womb's rich freightage she bore Ulysses.

He whose life past had been a series of disquiets, in seas among rude waves, in battles amongst ruder foes, now slept securely, forgetting all; his eyelids bound in such deep sleep, as only yielded to death; and when they reached the nearest Ithacan port by the next morning, he was still asleep. The mariners not willing to awake him, landed him softly, and laid him in a cave at the foot of an olive-tree, which made a shady recess in that narrow harbour, the haunt of almost none but the sea-nymphs, which are called Naiads; few ships before this Phæacian vessel having put into that haven, by reason of the difficulty and narrowness of the entrance. Here

leaving him asleep, and disposing in safe places near him the presents with which king Alcinous had dismissed him, they departed for Phæacia; where these wretched mariners never again set foot; but just as they arrived, and thought to salute their country earth; in sight of their city's turrets, and in open view of their friends who from the harbour with shouts greeted their return; their vessel and all the mariners which were in her were turned to stone, and stood transformed and fixed in sight of the whole Phæacian city, where it yet stands, by Neptune's vindictive wrath; who resented thus highly the contempt which those Phæacians had shown in convoying home a man whom the god had destined to destruction. Whence it comes to pass that the Phæacians at this day will at no price be induced to lend their ships to strangers, or to become the carriers for other nations, so highly do they still dread the displeasure of the sea-god, while they see that terrible monument ever in sight.

When Ulysses awoke, which was not till some time after the mariners had departed, he did not at first know his country again, either that long absence had made it strange, or that Minerva (which was more likely) had cast a cloud about his eyes, that he should have greater pleasure hereafter in discovering his mistake: but like a man suddenly awaking in some desert isle, to which his sea-mates have transported him in his sleep, he looked around, and discerning no known objects, he cast his hands to

heaven for pity, and complained on those ruthless men who had beguiled him with a promise of conveying him home to his country, and perfidiously left him to perish in an unknown land. But then the rich presents of gold and silver given him by Alcinous, which he saw carefully laid up in secure places near him, staggered him: which seemed not like the act of wrongful or unjust men, such as turn pirates for gain, or land helpless passengers in remote coasts to possess themselves of their goods.

While he remained in this suspense, there came up to him a young shepherd, clad in the finer sort of apparel, such as kings' sons wore in those days when princes did not disdain to tend sheep, who accosting him, was saluted again by Ulysses, who asked him what country that was, on which he had been just landed, and whether it were a part of a continent or an island. The young shepherd made show of wonder, to hear any one ask the name of that land; as country people are apt to esteem those for mainly ignorant and barbarous who do not know the names of places which are familiar to *them*, though perhaps they who ask have had no opportunities of knowing, and may have come from far countries.

"I had thought," said he, "that all people knew our land. It is rocky and barren, to be sure; but well enough: it feeds a goat or an ox well; it is not wanting neither in wine nor in wheat; it has good springs of water, some fair rivers; and wood enough, as you may see: it is called Ithaca."

Ulysses was joyed enough to find himself in his own country; but so prudently he carried his joy, that dissembling his true name and quality, he pretended to the shepherd that he was only some foreigner who by stress of weather had put into that port; and framed on the sudden a story to make it plausible, how he had come from Crete in a ship of Phæacia; when the young shepherd laughing, and taking Ulysses' hand in both his, said to him: "He must be cunning, I find, who thinks to overreach you. What, cannot you quit your wiles and your subtleties, now that you are in a state of security? must the first word with which you salute your native earth be an untruth? and think you that you are unknown?"

Ulysses looked again; and he saw, not a shepherd, but a beautiful woman, whom he immediately knew to be the goddess Minerva, that in the wars of Troy had frequently vouchsafed her sight to him; and had been with him since in perils, saving him unseen.

"Let not my ignorance offend thee, great Minerva," he cried, "or move thy displeasure, that in that shape I knew thee not; since the skill of discerning the deities is not attainable by wit or study, but hard to be hit by the wisest of mortals. To know thee truly through all thy changes is only given to those whom thou art pleased to grace. To all men thou takest all likenesses. All men in their wits think that they know thee, and that they have thee. Thou art wisdom itself. But a semblance of thee, which is

false wisdom, often is taken for thee: so thy counterfeit view appears to many, but thy true presence to few: those are they which, loving thee above all, are inspired with light from thee to know thee. But this I surely know, that all the time the sons of Greece waged war against Troy, I was sundry times graced with thy appearance; but since, I have never been able to set eyes upon thee till now; but have wandered at my own discretion, to myself a blind guide, erring up and down the world, wanting thee."

Then Minerva cleared his eyes, and he knew the ground on which he stood to be Ithaca, and that cave to be the same which the people of Ithaca had in former times made sacred to the sea-nymphs, and where he himself had done sacrifices to them a thousand times; and full in his view stood Mount Nerytus with all its woods: so that now he knew for a certainty that he was arrived in his own country, and with the delight which he felt he could not forbear stooping down and kissing the soil.

CHAPTER VIII

The change from a king to a beggar—Eumæus and the herdsmen—Telemachus

NOT long did Minerva suffer him to indulge vain transports, but briefly recounting to him the events which had taken place in Ithaca during his absence, she showed him that his way to his wife

and throne did not lie so open, but that before he was reinstated in the secure possession of them, he must encounter many difficulties. His palace, wanting its king, was become a resort of insolent and imperious men, the chief nobility of Ithaca and of the neighbouring isles, who, in the confidence of Ulysses being dead, came as suitors to Penelope. The queen (it was true) continued single, but was little better than a state-prisoner in the power of these men, who under a pretence of waiting her decision, occupied the king's house, rather as owners than guests, lording and domineering at their pleasure, profaning the palace, and wasting the royal substance, with their feasts and mad riots. Moreover the goddess told him how, fearing the attempts of these lawless men upon the person of his young son Telemachus, she herself had put it into the heart of the prince to go and seek his father in far countries; how in the shape of Mentor she had borne him company in his long search; which, though failing, as she meant it should fail, in its first object, had yet had this effect, that through hardships he had learned endurance, through experience he had gathered wisdom, and wherever his footsteps had been he had left such memorials of his worth, as the fame of Ulysses' son was already blown throughout the world. That it was now not many days since Telemachus had arrived in the island, to the great joy of the queen his mother, who had thought him dead, by reason of his long absence, and had begun

to mourn for him with a grief equal to that which she endured for Ulysses; the goddess herself having so ordered the course of his adventures, that the time of his return should correspond with the return of Ulysses, that they might together concert measures how to repress the power and insolence of those wicked suitors. This the goddess told him; but of the particulars of his son's adventures, of his having been detained in the Delightful Island, which his father had so lately left, of Calypso, and her nymphs, and the many strange occurrences which may be read with profit and delight in the history of the prince's adventures, she forbore to tell him as yet, as judging that he would hear them with greater pleasure from the lips of his son, when he should have him in an hour of stillness and safety, when their work should be done, and none of their enemies left alive to trouble them.

Then they sat down, the goddess and Ulysses, at the foot of a wild olive-tree, consulting how they might with safety bring about his restoration. And when Ulysses revolved in his mind how that his enemies were a multitude, and he single, he began to despond, and he said, "I shall die an ill death like Agamemnon; in the threshold of my own house I shall perish, like that unfortunate monarch, slain by some one of my wife's suitors." But then again calling to mind his ancient courage, he secretly wished that Minerva would but breathe such a spirit into his bosom as she enflamed him with in the day

of Troy's destruction, that he might encounter with three hundred of those impudent suitors at once, and strew the pavements of his beautiful palace with their bloods and brains.

And Minerva knew his thoughts, and she said, "I will be strongly with thee, if thou fail not to do thy part. And for a sign between us that I will perform my promise, and for a token on thy part of obedience, I must change thee, that thy person may not be known of men."

Then Ulysses bowed his head to receive the divine impression, and Minerva by her great power changed his person so that it might not be known. She changed him to appearance into a very old man, yet such a one as by his limbs and gait seemed to have been some considerable person in his time, and to retain yet some remains of his once prodigious strength. Also, instead of those rich robes in which king Alcinous had clothed him, she threw over his limbs such old and tattered rags as wandering beggars usually wear. A staff supported his steps, and a scrip hung to his back, such as travelling mendicants use, to hold the scraps which are given to them at rich men's doors. So from a king he became a beggar, as wise Tiresias had predicted to him in the shades.

To complete his humiliation, and to prove his obedience by suffering, she next directed him in this beggarly attire to go and present himself to his old herdsman Eumæus, who had the care of his swine

and his cattle, and had been a faithful steward to him all the time of his absence. Then strictly charging Ulysses that he should reveal himself to no man but to his own son, whom she would send to him when she saw occasion, the goddess went her way.

The transformed Ulysses bent his course to the cottage of the herdsman, and entering in at the front court, the dogs, of which Eumæus kept many fierce ones for the protection of the cattle, flew with open mouths upon him, as those ignoble animals have oftentimes an antipathy to the sight of anything like a beggar, and would have rent him in pieces with their teeth, if Ulysses had not had the prudence to let fall his staff, which had chiefly provoked their fury, and sat himself down in a careless fashion upon the ground; but for all that some serious hurt had certainly been done to him, so raging the dogs were, had not the herdsman, whom the barking of the dogs had fetched out of the house, with shouting and with throwing of stones repressed them.

He said, when he saw Ulysses, "Old father, how near you were to being torn in pieces by these rude dogs! I should never have forgiven myself, if through neglect of mine any hurt had happened to you. But heaven has given me so many cares to my portion, that I might well be excused for not attending to everything: while here I lie grieving and mourning for the absence of that majesty which once ruled here, and am forced to fatten his swine and his cattle for evil men, who hate him, and who wish his

death; when he perhaps strays up and down the world, and has not wherewith to appease hunger, if indeed he yet lives (which is a question) and enjoys the cheerful light of the sun." This he said, little thinking that he of whom he spoke now stood before him, and that in that uncouth disguise and beggarly obscurity was present the hidden majesty of Ulysses.

Then he had his guest into the house, and set meat and drink before him; and Ulysses said, "May Jove and all the other gods requite you for the kind speeches and hospitable usage which you have shown me!"

Eumæus made answer, "My poor guest, if one in much worse plight than yourself had arrived here, it were a shame to such scanty means as I have, if I had let him depart without entertaining him to the best of my ability. Poor men, and such as have no houses of their own, are by Jove himself recommended to our care. But the cheer which we that are servants to other men have to bestow, is but sorry at most, yet freely and lovingly I give it you. Indeed there once ruled here a man, whose return the gods have set their faces against, who, if he had been suffered to reign in peace and grow old among us, would have been kind to me and mine. But he is gone; and for his sake would to God that the whole posterity of Helen might perish with her, since in her quarrel so many worthies have perished. But such as your fare is, eat it, and be welcome;

such lean beasts as are food for poor herdsmen. The fattest go to feed the voracious stomachs of the queen's suitors. Shame on their unworthiness! there is no day in which two or three of the noblest of the herd are not slain to support their feasts and their surfeits."

Ulysses gave good ear to his words, and as he ate his meat, he even tore it and rent it with his teeth, for mere vexation that his fat cattle should be slain to glut the appetites of those godless suitors. And he said, "What chief or what ruler is this, that thou commendest so highly, and sayest that he perished at Troy? I am but a stranger in these parts. It may be I have heard of some such in my long travels."

Eumæus answered, "Old father, never one of all the strangers that have come to our coast with news of Ulysses being alive, could gain credit with the queen or her son yet. These travellers, to get raiment or a meal, will not stick to invent any lie. Truth is not the commodity they deal in. Never did the queen get anything of them but lies. She receives all that come graciously, hears their stories, inquires all she can, but all ends in tears and dissatisfaction. But in God's name, old father, if you have got a tale, make the most on't, it may gain you a cloak or a coat from somebody to keep you warm: but for him who is the subject of it, dogs and vultures long since have torn him limb from limb, or some great fish at sea has devoured him, or he lieth with no better monument upon his bones than the

sea-sand. But for me, past all the race of men, were tears created: for I never shall find so kind a royal master more; not if my father or my mother could come again and visit me from the tomb, would my eyes be so blessed, as they should be with the sight of him again, coming as from the dead. In his last rest my soul shall love him. He is not here, nor do I name him as a flatterer, but because I am thankful for his love and care which he had to me a poor man; and if I knew surely that he were past all shores that the sun shines upon, I would invoke him as a deified thing."

For this saying of Eumæus the waters stood in Ulysses' eyes, and he said, "My friend, to say and to affirm positively that he cannot be alive, is to give too much license to incredulity. For, not to speak at random, but with as much solemnity as an oath comes to, I say to you that Ulysses shall return, and whenever that day shall be, then shall you give to me a cloak and a coat; but till then, I will not receive so much as a thread of a garment, but rather go naked; for no less than the gates of hell do I hate that man, whom poverty can force to tell an untruth. Be Jove then witness to my words, that this very year, nay ere this month be fully ended, your eyes shall behold Ulysses, dealing vengeance in his own palace upon the wrongers of his wife and his son."

To give the better credence to his words, he amused Eumæus with a forged story of his life,

feigning of himself that he was a Cretan born, and one that went with Idomeneus to the wars of Troy. Also he said that he knew Ulysses, and related various passages which he alleged to have happened betwixt Ulysses and himself, which were either true in the main, as having really happened between Ulysses and some other person, or were so like to truth, as corresponding with the known character and actions of Ulysses that Eumæus' incredulity was not a little shaken. Among other things he asserted that he had lately been entertained in the court of Thesprotia, where the king's son of the country had told him that Ulysses had been there but just before him, and was gone upon a voyage to the oracle of Jove in Dodona, whence he should shortly return, and a ship would be ready by the bounty of the Thesprotians to convoy him straight to Ithaca. "And in token that what I tell you is true," said Ulysses, "if your king come not within the period which I have named, you shall have leave to give your servants commandment to take my old carcass, and throw it headlong from some steep rock into the sea, that poor men, taking example by me, may fear to lie." But Eumæus made answer that that should be small satisfaction or pleasure to him.

So while they sat discoursing in this manner, supper was served in, and the servants of the herdsman, who had been out all day in the fields, came in to supper, and took their seats at the fire, for the night was bitter and frosty. After supper, Ulysses,

who had well eaten and drunken, and was refreshed with the herdsman's good cheer, was resolved to try whether his host's hospitality would extend to the lending him a good warm mantle or rug to cover him in the night-season; and framing an artful tale for the purpose, in a merry mood, filling a cup of Greek wine, he thus began:

"I will tell you a story of your king Ulysses and myself. If there is ever a time when a man may have leave to tell his own stories, it is when he has drunken a little too much. Strong liquor driveth the fool, and moves even the heart of the wise, moves and impels him to sing and to dance, and break forth in pleasant laughters, and perchance to prefer a speech too which were better kept in. When the heart is open, the tongue will be stirring. But you shall hear. We led our powers to ambush once under the walls of Troy."

The herdsmen crowded about him eager to hear anything which related to their king Ulysses and the wars of Troy, and thus he went on:—

"I remember Ulysses and Menelaus had the direction of that enterprise, and they were pleased to join me with them in the command. I was at that time in some repute among men, though fortune has played me a trick since, as you may perceive. But I was somebody in those times, and could do something. Be that as it may, a bitter freezing night it was, such a night as this, the air cut like steel, and the sleet gathered on our shields like crystal. There

were some twenty of us that lay close crouched down among the reeds and bulrushes that grew in the moat that goes round the city. The rest of us made tolerable shift, for every man had been careful to bring with him a good cloak or mantle to wrap over his armour and keep himself warm; but I, as it chanced, had left my cloak behind me, as not expecting that the night would prove so cool, or rather I believe because I had at that time a brave suit of new armour on, which, being a soldier, and having some of the soldier's vice about me, *vanity*, I was not willing should be hidden under a cloak; but I paid for my indiscretion with my sufferings, for the inclement night, and the wet of the ditch in which we lay, I was well-nigh frozen to death; and when I could endure no longer, I jogged Ulysses, who was next to me, and had a nimble ear, and made known my case to him, assuring him that I must inevitably perish. He answered in a low whisper, 'Hush, lest any Greek should hear you, and take notice of your softness.' Not a word more he said, but showed as if he had no pity for the plight I was in. But he was as considerate as he was brave, and even then, as he lay with his head reposing upon his hand, he was meditating how to relieve me, without exposing my weakness to the soldiers. At last raising up his head, he made as if he had been asleep, and said, 'Friends, I have been warned in a dream to send to the fleet to king Agamemnon for a supply, to recruit our numbers, for we are not sufficient for this enterprise';

and they believing him, one Thoas was despatched on that errand, who departing, for more speed, as Ulysses had foreseen, left his upper garment behind him, a good warm mantle, to which I succeeded, and by the help of it got through the night with credit. This shift Ulysses made for one in need, and would to heaven that I had now that strength in my limbs, which made me in those days to be accounted fit to be a leader under Ulysses! I should not then want the loan of a cloak or mantle, to wrap about me and shield my old limbs from the night-air."

The tale pleased the herdsmen; and Eumæus, who more than all the rest was gratified to hear tales of Ulysses, true or false, said, that for his story he deserved a mantle and a night's lodging, which he should have; and he spread for him a bed of goat and sheep skins by the fire; and the seeming beggar, who was indeed the true Ulysses, lay down and slept under that poor roof, in that abject disguise to which the will of Minerva had subjected him.

When morning was come, Ulysses made offer to depart, as if he were not willing to burthen his host's hospitality any longer, but said that he would go and try the humanity of the town's folk, if any there would bestow upon him a bit of bread or a cup of drink. Perhaps the queen's suitors (he said) out of their full feasts would bestow a scrap on him: for he could wait at table, if need were, and play the nimble serving-man, he could fetch wood (he said) or build a fire, prepare roast meat or boiled, mix the wine

with water, or do any of those offices which recommended poor men like him to services in great men's houses.

"Alas! poor guest," said Eumæus, "you know not what you speak. What should so poor and old a man as you do at the suitors' tables? Their light minds are not given to such grave servitors. They must have youths, richly tricked out in flowing vests, with curled hair, like so many of Jove's cup-bearers, to fill out the wine to them as they sit at table, and to shift their trenchers. Their gorged insolence would but despise and make a mock at thy age. Stay here. Perhaps the queen, or Telemachus, hearing of thy arrival, may send to thee of their bounty."

As he spake these words, the steps of one crossing the front court were heard, and a noise of the dogs fawning and leaping about as for joy; by which token Eumæus guessed that it was the prince, who hearing of a traveller being arrived at Eumæus' cottage that brought tidings of his father, was come to search the truth, and Eumæus said: "It is the tread of Telemachus, the son of king Ulysses." Before he could well speak the words, the prince was at the door, whom Ulysses rising to receive, Telemachus would not suffer that so aged a man, as he appeared, should rise to do respect to him, but he courteously and reverently took him by the hand, and inclined his head to him, as if he had surely known that it was his father indeed: but Ulysses covered his eyes with his hands, that he might not show the waters

which stood in them. And Telemachus said, "Is this the man who can tell us tidings of the king my father?"

"He brags himself to be a Cretan born," said Eumæus, "and that he has been a soldier and a traveller, but whether he speak the truth or not, he alone can tell. But whatsoever he has been, what he is now is apparent. Such as he appears, I give him to you; do what you will with him; his boast at present is that he is at the very best a supplicant."

"Be he what he may," said Telemachus, "I accept him at your hands. But where I should bestow him I know not, seeing that in the palace his age would not exempt him from the scorn and contempt which my mother's suitors in their light minds would be sure to fling upon him. A mercy if he escaped without blows: for they are a company of evil men, whose profession is wrongs and violence."

Ulysses answered: "Since it is free for any man to speak in presence of your greatness, I must say that my heart puts on a wolfish inclination to tear and to devour, hearing your speech, that these suitors should with such injustice rage, where you should have the rule solely. What should the cause be? do you wilfully give way to their ill manners? or has your government been such as has procured ill-will towards you from your people? or do you mistrust your kinsfolk and friends in such sort, as without trial to decline their aid? a man's kindred are they that he might trust to when extremities ran high."

Telemachus replied: "The kindred of Ulysses are few. I have no brothers to assist me in the strife. But the suitors are powerful in kindred and friends. The house of old Arcesius has had this fate from the heavens, that from old it still has been supplied with single heirs. To Arcesius Laertes only was born, from Laertes descended only Ulysses, from Ulysses I alone have sprung, whom he left so young, that from me never comfort arose to him. But the end of all rests in the hands of the gods."

Then Eumæus departing to see to some necessary business of his herds, Minerva took a woman's shape, and stood in the entry of the door, and was seen to Ulysses, but by his son she was not seen, for the presences of the gods are invisible save to those to whom they will to reveal themselves. Nevertheless the dogs which were about the door saw the goddess, and durst not bark, but went crouching and licking of the dust for fear. And giving signs to Ulysses that the time was now come in which he should make himself known to his son, by her great power she changed back his shape into the same which it was before she transformed him; and Telemachus, who saw the change, but nothing of the manner by which it was effected, only he saw the appearance of a king in the vigour of his age where but just now he had seen a worn and decrepit beggar, was struck with fear, and said, "Some god has done this house this honour," and he turned away his eyes, and would have worshipped. But his father

permitted not, but said, "Look better at me; I am no deity, why put you upon me the reputation of godhead? I am no more but thy father: I am even he; I am that Ulysses, by reason of whose absence thy youth has been exposed to such wrongs from injurious men." Then kissed he his son, nor could any longer refrain those tears which he had held under such mighty restraint before, though they would ever be forcing themselves out in spite of him; but now, as if their sluices had burst, they came out like rivers, pouring upon the warm cheeks of his son. Nor yet by all these violent arguments could Telemachus be persuaded to believe that it was his father, but he said, some deity had taken that shape to mock him; for he affirmed, that it was not in the power of any man, who is sustained by mortal food, to change his shape so in a moment from age to youth: for "but now," said he, "you were all wrinkles, and were old, and now you look as the gods are pictured."

His father replied: "Admire, but fear not, and know me to be at all parts substantially thy father, who in the inner powers of his mind, and the unseen workings of a father's love to thee, answers to his outward shape and pretence! There shall no more Ulysseses come here. I am he that after twenty years' absence, and suffering a world of ill, have recovered at last the sight of my country earth. It was the will of Minerva that I should be changed as you saw me. She put me thus together; she puts

together or takes to pieces whom she pleases. It is in the law of her free power to do it: sometimes to show her favourites under a cloud, and poor, and again to restore to them their ornaments. The gods raise and throw down men with ease."

Then Telemachus could hold out no longer, but he gave way now to a full belief and persuasion, of that which for joy at first he could not credit, that it was indeed his true and very father, that stood before him; and they embraced, and mingled their tears.

Then said Ulysses, "Tell me who these suitors are, what are their numbers, and how stands the queen thy mother affected to them?"

"She bears them still in expectation," said Telemachus, "which she never means to fulfil, that she will accept the hand of some one of them in second nuptials. For she fears to displease them by an absolute refusal. So from day to day she lingers them on with hope, which they are content to bear the deferring of, while they have entertainment at free cost in our palace."

Then said Ulysses, "Reckon up their numbers that we may know their strength and ours, if we having none but ourselves may hope to prevail against them."

"O father," he replied, "I have ofttimes heard of your fame for wisdom, and of the great strength of your arm, but the venturous mind which your speeches now indicate moves me even to amaze-

ment: for in no wise can it consist with wisdom or a sound mind, that two should try their strengths against a host. Nor five, or ten, or twice ten strong are these suitors, but many more by much: from Dulichium came there fifty and two, they and their servants; twice twelve crossed the seas hither from Samos; from Zacynthus twice ten; of our native Ithacans, men of chief note, are twelve who aspire to the bed and crown of Penelope; and all these under one strong roof, a fearful odds against two! My father, there is need of caution, lest the cup which your great mind so thirsts to taste of vengeance prove bitter to yourself in the drinking. And therefore it were well that we would bethink us of some one who might assist us in this undertaking."

"Thinkest thou," said his father, "if we had Minerva and the king of skies to be our friends, would their sufficiencies make strong our part; or must we look out for some further aid yet?"

"They you speak of are above the clouds," said Telemachus, "and are sound aids indeed; as powers that not only exceed human, but bear the chiefest sway among the gods themselves."

Then Ulysses gave directions to his son to go and mingle with the suitors, and in no wise to impart his secret to any, not even to the queen his mother, but to hold himself in readiness, and to have his weapons and his good armour in preparation. And he charged him, that when he himself should come to the palace, as he meant to follow shortly after

and present himself in his beggar's likeness to the suitors, that whatever he should see which might grieve his heart, with what foul usage and contumelious language soever the suitors should receive his father, coming in that shape, though they should strike and drag him by the heels along the floors, that he should not stir nor make offer to oppose them, further than by mild words to expostulate with them, until Minerva from heaven should give the sign which should be the prelude to their destruction. And Telemachus promising to obey his instructions departed; and the shape of Ulysses fell to what it had been before, and he became to all outward appearance a beggar, in base and beggarly attire.

CHAPTER IX

The queen's suitors—The battle of the beggars—The armour taken down—The meeting with Penelope

FROM the house of Eumæus the seeming beggar took his way, leaning on his staff, till he reached the palace, entering in at the hall where the suitors sat at meat. They in the pride of their feasting began to break their jests in mirthful manner, when they saw one looking so poor and so aged approach. He who expected no better entertainment was nothing moved at their behaviour, but, as became the character which he had assumed, in a suppliant posture crept by turns to every suitor, and held out his

hands for some charity, with such a natural and beggar-resembling grace, that he might seem to have practised begging all his life; yet there was a sort of dignity in his most abject stoopings, that whoever had seen him, would have said, If it had pleased heaven that this poor man had been born a king, he would gracefully have filled a throne. And some pitied him, and some gave him alms, as their present humours inclined them, but the greater part reviled him, and bid him begone, as one that spoiled their feast; for the presence of misery has this power with it, that while it stays, it can dash and overturn the mirth even of those who feel no pity or wish to relieve it; nature bearing this witness of herself in the hearts of the most obdurate.

Now Telemachus sat at meat with the suitors, and knew that it was the king his father, who in that shape begged an alms; and when his father came and presented himself before him in turn, as he had done to the suitors one by one, he gave him of his own meat which he had in his dish, and of his own cup to drink. And the suitors were past measure offended to see a pitiful beggar, as they esteemed him, to be so choicely regarded by the prince.

Then Antinous, who was a great lord, and of chief note among the suitors, said, "Prince Telemachus does ill to encourage these wandering beggars, who go from place to place, affirming that they have been some considerable persons in their time, filling the ears of such as hearken to them with

lies, and pressing with their bold feet into kings' palaces. This is some saucy vagabond, some travelling Egyptian."

"I see," said Ulysses, "that a poor man should get but little at your board, scarce should he get salt from your hands if he brought his own meat."

Lord Antinous, indignant to be answered with such sharpness by a supposed beggar, snatched up a stool, with which he smote Ulysses where the neck and shoulders join. This usage moved not Ulysses; but in his great heart he meditated deep evils to come upon them all, which for a time must be kept close, and he went and sat himself down in the doorway to eat of that which was given him, and he said, "For life or possessions a man will fight, but for his belly this man smites. If a poor man has any god to take his part, my lord Antinous shall not live to be the queen's husband."

Then Antinous raged highly, and threatened to drag him by the heels, and to rend his rags about his ears, if he spoke another word.

But the other suitors did in no wise approve of the harsh language, nor of the blow which Antinous had dealt; and some of them said, "Who knows but one of the deities goes about, hid under that poor disguise? for in the likeness of poor pilgrims the gods have many times descended to try the dispositions of men, whether they be humane or impious." While these things passed, Telemachus sat and observed all, but held his peace, remembering the in-

structions of his father. But secretly he waited for the sign which Minerva was to send from heaven.

That day there followed Ulysses to the court one of the common sort of beggars, Irus by name, one that had received alms beforetime of the suitors, and was their ordinary sport, when they were inclined (as that day) to give way to mirth, to see him eat and drink; for he had the appetite of six men; and was of huge stature and proportions of body; yet had in him no spirit nor courage of a man. This man, thinking to curry favour with the suitors, and recommend himself especially to such a great lord as Antinous was, began to revile and scorn Ulysses, putting foul language upon him, and fairly challenging him to fight with the fist. But Ulysses, deeming his railings to be nothing more than jealousy and that envious disposition which beggars commonly manifest to brothers in their trade, mildly besought him not to trouble him, but to enjoy that portion which the liberality of their entertainers gave him, as he did, quietly; seeing that of their bounty there was sufficient for all.

But Irus, thinking that this forbearance in Ulysses was nothing more than a sign of fear, so much the more highly stormed, and bellowed, and provoked him to fight; and by this time the quarrel had attracted the notice of the suitors, who with loud laughters and shouting egged on the dispute, and lord Antinous swore by all the gods it should be a battle, and that in that hall the strife should be de-

termined. To this the rest of the suitors with violent clamours acceded, and a circle was made for the combatants, and a fat goat was proposed as the victor's prize, as at the Olympic or the Pythian games. Then Ulysses, seeing no remedy, or being not unwilling that the suitors should behold some proof of that strength which ere long in their own persons they were to taste of, stripped himself, and prepared for the combat. But first he demanded that he should have fair play shown him, that none in that assembly should aid his opponent, or take part against him, for, being an old man, they might easily crush him with their strengths. And Telemachus passed his word that no foul play should be shown him, but that each party should be left to their own unassisted strengths, and to this he made Antinous and the rest of the suitors swear.

But when Ulysses had laid aside his garments, and was bare to the waist, all the beholders admired at the goodly sight of his large shoulders being of such exquisite shape and whiteness, and at his great and brawny bosom, and the youthful strength which seemed to remain in a man thought so old; and they said, "What limbs and what sinews he has!" and coward fear seized on the mind of that great vast beggar, and he dropped his threats and big words, and would have fled, but lord Antinous stayed him, and threatened him that if he declined the combat, he would put him in a ship, and land him on the shores where king Echetus reigned, the roughest

tyrant which at that time the world contained, and who had that antipathy to rascal beggars, such as he, that when any landed on his coast, he would crop their ears and noses and give them to the dogs to tear. So Irus, in whom fear of king Echetus prevailed above the fear of Ulysses, addressed himself to fight. But Ulysses, provoked to be engaged in so odious a strife with a fellow of his base conditions, and loathing longer to be made a spectacle to entertain the eyes of his foes, with one blow which he struck him beneath the ear, so shattered the teeth and jaw-bone of this soon baffled coward, that he laid him sprawling in the dust, with small stomach or ability to renew the contest. Then raising him on his feet, he led him bleeding and sputtering to the door, and put his staff into his hand, and bid him go use his command upon dogs and swine, but not presume himself to be lord of the guests another time, nor of the beggary!

The suitors applauded in their vain minds the issue of the contest, and rioted in mirth at the expense of poor Irus, who they vowed should be forthwith embarked and sent to king Echetus; and they bestowed thanks on Ulysses for ridding the court of that unsavoury morsel, as they called him; but in their inward souls they would not have cared if Irus had been victor, and Ulysses had taken the foil, but it was mirth to them to see the beggars fight. In such pastimes and light entertainments the day wore away.

When evening was come the suitors betook themselves to music and dancing. And Ulysses leaned his back against a pillar from which certain lamps hung which gave light to the dancers, and he made show of watching the dancers, but very different thoughts were in his head. And as he stood near the lamps, the light fell upon his head, which was thin of hair and bald, as an old man's. And Eurymachus, a suitor, taking occasion from some words which were spoken before, scoffed and said, "Now I know for a certainty that some god lurks under the poor and beggarly appearance of this man, for as he stands by the lamps, his sleek head throws beams around it, like as it were a glory." And another said, "He passes his time too not much unlike the gods, lazily living exempt from labour, taking offerings of men." "I warrant," said Eurymachus again, "he could not raise a fence or dig a ditch for his livelihood, if a man would hire him to work in a garden."

"I wish," said Ulysses, "that you who speak this and myself were to be tried at any task-work, that I had a good crooked scythe put in my hand, that was sharp and strong, and you such another, where the grass grew longest, to be up by daybreak, mowing the meadows till the sun went down, not tasting of food till we had finished, or that we were set to plough four acres in one day of good glebe land, to see whose furrows were evenest and cleanest, or that we might have one wrestling-bout together, or that in our right hands a good steel-headed lance

were placed, to try whose blows fell heaviest and thickest upon the adversary's headpiece. I would cause you such work, as you should have small reason to reproach me with being slack at work. But you would do well to spare me this reproach, and to save your strength, till the owner of this house shall return, till the day when Ulysses shall return, when returning he shall enter upon his birthright."

This was a galling speech to those suitors, to whom Ulysses' return was indeed the thing which they most dreaded; and a sudden fear fell upon their souls, as if they were sensible of the real presence of that man who did indeed stand amongst them, but not in that form as they might know him; and Eurymachus, incensed, snatched a massy cup which stood on a table near, and hurled it at the head of the supposed beggar, and but narrowly missed the hitting of him; and all the suitors rose, as at once, to thrust him out of the hall, which they said his beggarly presence and his rude speeches had profaned. But Telemachus cried to them to forbear, and not to presume to lay hands upon a wretched man to whom he had promised protection. He asked if they were mad, to mix such abhorred uproar with his feasts. He bade them take their food and their wine, to sit up or go to bed at their free pleasures, so long as he should give license to that freedom; but why should they abuse his banquet, or let the words which a poor beggar spake have power to move their spleens so fiercely?

They bit their lips and frowned for anger, to be checked so by a youth; nevertheless for that time they had the grace to abstain, either for shame, or that Minerva had infused into them a terror of Ulysses' son.

So that day's feast was concluded without bloodshed, and the suitors, tired with their sports, departed severally each man to his apartment. Only Ulysses and Telemachus remained. And now Telemachus, by his father's direction, went and brought down into the hall armour and lances from the armoury: for Ulysses said, "On the morrow we shall have need of them." And moreover he said, "If any one shall ask why you have taken them down, say, it is to clean them and scour them from the rust which they have gathered since the owner of this house went for Troy." And as Telemachus stood by the armour, the lights were all gone out, and it was pitch-dark, and the armour gave out glistening beams as of fire, and he said to his father, "The pillars of the house are on fire." And his father said, "It is the gods who sit above the stars and have power to make the night as light as the day." And he took it for a good omen. And Telemachus fell to cleaning and sharpening of the lances.

Now Ulysses had not seen his wife Penelope in all the time since his return; for the queen did not care to mingle with the suitors at their banquets, but, as became one that had been Ulysses' wife, kept much in private, spinning and doing her excellent

housewiferies among her maids in the remote apartments of the palace. Only upon solemn days she would come down and show herself to the suitors. And Ulysses was filled with a longing desire to see his wife again, whom for twenty years he had not beheld, and he softly stole through the known passages of his beautiful house, till he came where the maids were lighting the queen through a stately gallery that led to the chamber where she slept. And when the maids saw Ulysses, they said, "It is the beggar who came to the court to-day, about whom all that uproar was stirred up in the hall: what does he here?" But Penelope gave commandment that he should be brought before her, for she said, "It may be that he has travelled, and has heard something concerning Ulysses."

Then was Ulysses right glad to hear himself named by his queen, to find himself in no wise forgotten, nor her great love towards him decayed in all that time that he had been away. And he stood before his queen, and she knew him not to be Ulysses, but supposed that he had been some poor traveller. And she asked him of what country he was.

He told her (as he had before told to Eumæus) that he was a Cretan born, and however poor and cast down he now seemed, no less a man than brother to Idomeneus, who was grandson to king Minos, and though he now wanted bread, he had once had it in his power to feast Ulysses. Then he feigned how Ulysses, sailing for Troy, was forced

by stress of weather to put his fleet in at a port of Crete, where for twelve days he was his guest, and entertained by him with all befitting guest-rites. And he described the very garments which Ulysses had on, by which Penelope knew that he had seen her lord.

In this manner Ulysses told his wife many tales of himself, at most but painting, but painting so near to the life, that the feeling of that which she took at her ears became so strong, that the kindly tears ran down her fair cheeks, while she thought upon her lord, dead she thought him, and heavily mourned the loss of him, whom she missed, whom she could not find, though in very deed he stood so near her.

Ulysses was moved to see her weep, but he kept his own eyes as dry as iron or horn in their lids, putting a bridle upon his strong passion, that it should not issue to sight.

Then he told her how he had lately been at the court of Thesprotia, and what he had learned concerning Ulysses there, in order as he had delivered to Eumæus: and Penelope was won to believe that there might be a possibility of Ulysses being alive, and she said, "I dreamed a dream this morning. Methought I had twenty household fowl which did eat wheat steeped in water from my hand, and there came suddenly from the clouds a crook-beaked hawk who soused on them and killed them all, trussing their necks, then took his flight back up to the

clouds. And in my dream methought that I wept and made great moan for my fowls, and for the destruction which the hawk had made; and my maids came about me to comfort me. And in the height of my griefs the hawk came back, and lighting upon the beam of my chamber, he said to me in a man's voice, which sounded strangely even in my dream, to hear a hawk to speak: 'Be of good cheer,' he said, 'O daughter of Icarius; for this is no dream which thou hast seen, but that which shall happen to thee indeed. Those household fowl which thou lamentest so without reason, are the suitors who devour thy substance, even as thou sawest the fowl eat from thy hand, and the hawk is thy husband, who is coming to give death to the suitors.' And I awoke, and went to see to my fowls if they were alive, whom I found eating wheat from their troughs, all well and safe as before my dream."

Then said Ulysses, "This dream can endure no other interpretation than that which the hawk gave to it, who is your lord, and who is coming quickly to effect all that his words told you."

"Your words," she said, "my old guest, are so sweet, that would you sit and please me with your speech, my ears would never let my eyes close their spheres for very joy of your discourse; but none that is merely mortal can live without the death of sleep, so the gods who are without death themselves have ordained it, to keep the memory of our mortality in our minds, while we experience that as much as we

live we die every day: in which consideration I will ascend my bed, which I have nightly watered with my tears since he that was the joy of it departed for that bad city"; she so speaking, because she could not bring her lips to name the name of Troy so much hated. So for that night they parted, Penelope to her bed, and Ulysses to his son, and to the armour and the lances in the hall, where they sat up all night cleaning and watching by the armour.

CHAPTER X

The madness from above—The bow of Ulysses—The slaughter—The conclusion

WHEN daylight appeared, a tumultuous concourse of suitors again filled the hall; and some wondered, and some inquired what meant that glittering store of armour and lances which lay on heaps by the entry of the door; and to all that asked Telemachus made reply, that he had caused them to be taken down to cleanse them of the rust and of the stain which they had contracted by lying so long unused, even ever since his father went for Troy; and with that answer their minds were easily satisfied. So to their feasting and vain rioting again they fell. Ulysses by Telemachus' order had a seat and a mess assigned to him in the doorway, and he had his eye ever on the lances. And it moved gall in some of the great ones there present, to have their

feast still dulled with the society of that wretched beggar as they deemed him, and they reviled and spurned at him with their feet. Only there was one Philætius, who had something a better nature than the rest, that spake kindly to him, and had his age in respect. He coming up to Ulysses, took him by the hand with a kind of fear, as if touched exceedingly with imagination of his great worth, and said thus to him, "Hail! father stranger! my brows have sweat to see the injuries which you have received, and my eyes have broke forth in tears, when I have only thought that such being oftentimes the lot of worthiest men, to this plight Ulysses may be reduced, and that he now may wander from place to place as you do; for such who are compelled by need to range here and there, and have no firm home to fix their feet upon, God keeps them in this earth, as under water; so are they kept down and depressed. And a dark thread is sometimes spun in the fates of kings."

At this bare likening of the beggar to Ulysses, Minerva from heaven made the suitors for foolish joy to go mad, and roused them to such a laughter as would never stop, they laughed without power of ceasing, their eyes stood full of tears for violent joys; but fears and horrible misgivings succeeded: and one among them stood up and prophesied: "Ah, wretches!" he said, "what madness from heaven has seized you, that you can laugh? see you not that your meat drops blood? a night, like the night of

death, wraps you about, you shriek without knowing it; your eyes thrust forth tears; the fixed walls, and the beam that bears the whole house up, fall blood; ghosts choke up the entry; full is the hall with apparitions of murdered men; under your feet is hell; the sun falls from heaven, and it is midnight at noon." But like men whom the gods had infatuated to their destruction, they mocked at his fears, and Eurymachus said, "This man is surely mad, conduct him forth into the market-place, set him in the light, for he dreams that 't is night within the house."

But Theoclymenus (for that was the prophet's name), whom Minerva had graced with a prophetic spirit, that he foreseeing might avoid the destruction which awaited them, answered and said: "Eurymachus, I will not require a guide of thee, for I have eyes and ears, the use of both my feet, and a sane mind within me, and with these I will go forth of the doors, because I know the imminent evils which await all you that stay, by reason of this poor guest who is a favourite with all the gods." So saying he turned his back upon those inhospitable men, and went away home, and never returned to the palace.

These words which he spoke were not unheard by Telemachus, who kept still his eye upon his father, expecting fervently when he would give the sign, which was to precede the slaughter of the suitors.

They dreaming of no such thing, fell sweetly to their dinner, as joying in the great store of banquet

which was heaped in full tables about them; but there reigned not a bitterer banquet planet in all heaven, than that which hung over them this day by secret destination of Minerva.

There was a bow which Ulysses left when he went for Troy. It had lain by since that time, out of use and unstrung, for no man had strength to draw that bow, save Ulysses. So it had remained as a monument of the great strength of its master. This bow, with the quiver of arrows belonging thereto, Telemachus had brought down from the armoury on the last night along with the lances; and now Minerva, intending to do Ulysses an honour, put it into the mind of Telemachus to propose to the suitors to try who was strongest to draw that bow; and he promised that to the man who should be able to draw that bow, his mother should be given in marriage; Ulysses' wife, the prize to him who should bend the bow of Ulysses.

There was great strife and emulation stirred up among the suitors at those words of the prince Telemachus. And to grace her son's words, and to confirm the promise which he had made, Penelope came and showed herself that day to the suitors; and Minerva made her that she appeared never so comely in their sight as that day, and they were inflamed with the beholding of so much beauty, proposed as the price of so great manhood; and they cried out, that if all those heroes who sailed to Colchos for the rich purchase of the golden-fleeced

ram, had seen earth's richer prize, Penelope, they would not have made their voyage, but would have vowed their valours and their lives to her, for she was at all parts faultless.

And she said, "The gods have taken my beauty from me, since my lord went for Troy." But Telemachus willed his mother to depart and not be present at that contest, for he said, "It may be, some rougher strife shall chance of this, than may be expedient for a woman to witness." And she retired, she and her maids, and left the hall.

Then the bow was brought into the midst, and a mark was set up by prince Telemachus: and lord Antinous as the chief among the suitors had the first offer, and he took the bow and fitting an arrow to the string, he strove to bend it, but not with all his might and main could he once draw together the ends of that tough bow; and when he found how vain a thing it was to endeavour to draw Ulysses' bow, he desisted, blushing for shame and for mere anger. Then Eurymachus adventured, but with no better success; but as it had torn the hands of Antinous, so did the bow tear and strain his hands, and marred his delicate fingers, yet could he not once stir the string. Then called he to the attendants to bring fat and unctuous matter, which melting at the fire, he dipped the bow therein, thinking to supple it and make it more pliable, but not with all the helps of art could he succeed in making it to move. After him Liodes, and Am-

phinomus, and Polybus, and Eurynomus, and Polyctorides, assayed their strength, but not any one of them, or of the rest of those aspiring suitors, had any better luck: yet not the meanest of them there but thought himself well worthy of Ulysses' wife, though to shoot with Ulysses' bow the completest champion among them was by proof found too feeble.

Then Ulysses prayed them that he might have leave to try; and immediately a clamour was raised among the suitors, because of his petition, and they scorned and swelled with rage at his presumption, and that a beggar should seek to contend in a game of such noble mastery. But Telemachus ordered that the bow should be given him, and that he should have leave to try, since they had failed; "for," he said, "the bow is mine, to give or to withhold": and none durst gainsay the prince.

Then Ulysses gave a sign to his son, and he commanded the doors of the hall to be made fast, and all wondered at his words, but none could divine the cause. And Ulysses took the bow into his hands, and before he essayed to bend it, he surveyed it at all parts to see whether, by long lying by, it had contracted any stiffness which hindered the drawing; and as he was busied in the curious surveying of his bow, some of the suitors mocked him and said, "Past doubt this man is a right cunning archer, and knows his craft well. See how he turns it over and over, and looks into it as if he could see through

the wood." And others said, "We wish some one would tell out gold into our laps but for so long a time as he shall be in drawing of that string." But when he had spent some little time in making proof of the bow, and had found it to be in good plight, like as a harper in tuning of his harp draws out a string, with such ease or much more did Ulysses draw to the head the string of his own tough bow, and in letting of it go, it twanged with such a shrill noise as a swallow makes when it sings through the air; which so much amazed the suitors, that their colours came and went, and the skies gave out a noise of thunder, which at heart cheered Ulysses, for he knew that now his long labours by the disposal of the fates drew to an end. Then fitted he an arrow to the bow, and drawing it to the head, he sent it right to the mark which the prince had set up. Which done, he said to Telemachus, "You have got no disgrace yet by your guest, for I have struck the mark I shot at, and gave myself no such trouble in teasing the bow with fat and fire, as these men did, but have made proof that my strength is not impaired, nor my age so weak and contemptible as these were pleased to think it. But come, the day going down calls us to supper, after which succeed poem and harp, and all delights which use to crown princely banquetings."

So saying, he beckoned to his son, who straight girt his sword to his side, and took one of the lances (of which there lay great store from the armoury)

in his hand, and armed at all points, advanced towards his father.

The upper rags which Ulysses wore fell from his shoulder, and his own kingly likeness returned, when he rushed to the great hall door with bow and quiver full of shafts, which down at his feet he poured, and in bitter words presignified his deadly intent to the suitors. "Thus far," he said, "this contest has been decided harmless: now for us there rests another mark, harder to hit, but which my hands shall essay notwithstanding, if Phœbus, god of archers, be pleased to give me mastery." With that he let fly a deadly arrow at Antinous, which pierced him in the throat as he was in the act of lifting a cup of wine to his mouth. Amazement seized the suitors, as their great champion fell dead, and they raged highly against Ulysses, and said that it should prove the dearest shaft which he ever let fly, for he had slain a man, whose like breathed not in any part of the kingdom: and they flew to their arms, and would have seized the lances, but Minerva struck them with dimness of sight that they went erring up and down the hall, not knowing where to find them. Yet so infatuated were they by the displeasure of heaven, that they did not see the imminent peril which impended over them, but every man believed that this accident had happened beside the intention of the doer. Fools! to think by shutting their eyes to evade destiny, or that any other cup remained for them, but that which their great Antinous had tasted!

Then Ulysses revealed himself to all in that presence, and that he was the man whom they held to be dead at Troy, whose palace they had usurped, whose wife in his lifetime they had sought in impious marriage, and that for this reason destruction was come upon them. And he dealt his deadly arrows among them, and there was no avoiding him, nor escaping from his horrid person, and Telemachus by his side plied them thick with those murderous lances from which there was no retreat, till fear itself made them valiant, and danger gave them eyes to understand the peril; then they which had swords drew them, and some with shields, that could find them, and some with tables and benches snatched up in haste, rose in a mass to overwhelm and crush those two; yet they singly bestirred themselves like men, and defended themselves against that great host, and through tables, shields and all, right through the arrows of Ulysses clove, and the irresistible lances of Telemachus; and many lay dead, and all had wounds, and Minerva in the likeness of a bird sate upon the beam which went across the hall, clapping her wings with a fearful noise, and sometimes the great bird would fly among them, cuffing at the swords and at the lances, and up and down the hall would go, beating her wings, and troubling everything, that it was frightful to behold, and it frayed the blood from the cheeks of those heaven-hated suitors: but to Ulysses and his son she appeared in her own divine similitude, with her

snake-fringed shield, a goddess armed, fighting their battles. Nor did that dreadful pair desist till they had laid all their foes at their feet. At their feet they lay in shoals; like fishes, when the fishermen break up their nets, so they lay gasping and sprawling at the feet of Ulysses and his son. And Ulysses remembered the prediction of Tiresias, which said that he was to perish by his own guests, unless he slew those who knew him not.

Then certain of the queen's household went up and told Penelope what had happened, and how her lord Ulysses had come home, and had slain the suitors. But she gave no heed to their words, but thought that some frenzy possessed them, or that they mocked her: for it is the property of such extremes of sorrow as she had felt, not to believe when any great joy cometh. And she rated and chid them exceedingly for troubling her. But they the more persisted in their asseverations of the truth of what they had affirmed; and some of them had seen the slaughtered bodies of the suitors dragged forth of the hall. And they said, "That poor guest whom you talked with last night was Ulysses." Then she was yet more fully persuaded that they mocked her, and she wept. But they said, "This thing is true which we have told. We sat within, in an inner room in the palace, and the doors of the hall were shut on us, but we heard the cries and the groans of the men that were killed, but saw nothing, till at length your son called to us to come in, and

entering we saw Ulysses standing in the midst of the slaughtered." But she persisting in her unbelief, said, that it was some god which had deceived them to think it was the person of Ulysses.

By this time Telemachus and his father had cleansed their hands from the slaughter, and were come to where the queen was talking with those of her household; and when she saw Ulysses, she stood motionless, and had no power to speak, sudden surprise and joy and fear and many passions so strove within her. Sometimes she was clear that it was her husband that she saw, and sometimes the alterations which twenty years had made in his person (yet that was not much) perplexed her that she knew not what to think, and for joy she could not believe; and yet for joy she would not but believe; and, above all, that sudden change from a beggar to a king troubled her, and wrought uneasy scruples in her mind. But Telemachus seeing her strangeness, blamed her, and called her an ungentle and tyrannous mother! and said that she showed a too great curiousness of modesty, to abstain from embracing his father, and to have doubts of his person, when to all present it was evident that he was the very real and true Ulysses.

Then she mistrusted no longer, but ran and fell upon Ulysses' neck, and said, "Let not my husband be angry, that I held off so long with strange delays; it is the gods who, severing us for so long time, have caused this unseemly distance in me. If Mene-

laus' wife had used half my caution, she would never have taken so freely to a stranger's bed; and she might have spared us all these plagues which have come upon us through her shameless deed."

These words with which Penelope excused herself, wrought more affection in Ulysses than if upon a first sight she had given up herself implicitly to his embraces; and he wept for joy to possess a wife so discreet, so answering to his own staid mind, that had a depth of wit proportioned to his own, and one that held chaste virtue at so high a price, and he thought the possession of such a one cheaply purchased with the loss of all Circe's delights, and Calypso's immortality of joys; and his long labours and his severe sufferings past seemed as nothing, now they were crowned with the enjoyment of his virtuous and true wife Penelope. And as sad men at sea whose ship has gone to pieces nigh shore, swimming for their lives, all drenched in foam and brine, crawl up to some poor patch of land, which they take possession of with as great a joy as if they had the world given them in fee, with such delight did this chaste wife cling to her lord restored, till the dark night fast coming on reminded her of that more intimate and happy union when in her long-widowed bed she should once again clasp a living Ulysses.

So from that time the land had rest from the suitors. And the happy Ithacans with songs and solemn sacrifices of praise to the gods celebrated the return of Ulysses: for he that had been so long

absent was returned to wreak the evil upon the heads of the doers; in the place where they had done the evil, there wreaked he his vengeance upon them.

GUY FAUX

A VERY ingenious and subtle writer, whom there is good reason for suspecting to be an ex-Jesuit, not unknown at Douay some five-and-twenty years since (he will not obtrude himself at M——th again in a hurry), about a twelvemonth back set himself to prove the character of the Powder Plot Conspirators to have been that of heroic self-devotedness and true Christian martyrdom. Under the mask of Protestant candour, he actually gained admission for his treatise into a London weekly paper not particularly distinguished for its zeal towards either religion. But, admitting Catholic principles, his arguments are shrewd and incontrovertible. He says:—

"Guy Faux was a fanatic; but he was no hypocrite. He ranks among *good haters*. He was cruel, bloody-minded, reckless of all considerations but those of an infuriated and bigoted faith; but he was a true son of the Catholic Church, a martyr, and a confessor, for all that. He who can prevail upon himself to devote his life to a cause, however we may condemn his opinions or abhor his actions, vouches at least for the honesty of his principles and the disinterestedness of his motives. He may be guilty of the worst practices; but he is capable of the greatest. He is no longer a slave, but free. The contempt of death is the beginning of virtue. The hero of the Gunpowder Plot was, if you will, a fool, a madman,

an assassin; call him what names you please: still he was neither knave nor coward. He did not propose to blow up the Parliament, and come off scot-free himself; he showed that he valued his own life no more than theirs in such a cause, where the integrity of the Catholic faith and the salvation of perhaps millions of souls was at stake. He did not call it a murder, but a sacrifice, which he was about to achieve; he was armed with the Holy Spirit and with fire; he was the Church's chosen servant, and her blessed martyr. He comforted himself as 'the best of cut-throats.' How many wretches are there who would have undertaken to do what he intended for a sum of money, if they could have got off with impunity! How few are there who would have put themselves in Guy Faux's situation to save the universe! Yet, in the latter case, we affect to be thrown into greater consternation than at the most unredeemed acts of villainy; as if the absolute disinterestedness of the motive doubled the horror of the deed! The cowardice and selfishness of mankind are in fact shocked at the consequences to themselves (if such examples are held up for imitation); and they make a fearful outcry against the violation of every principle of morality, lest they, too, should be called on for any such tremendous sacrifices; lest they in their turn, should have to go on the forlorn hope of extra-official duty. *Charity begins at home*, is a maxim that prevails as well in the courts of consciousness as in those of prudence. We would

be thought to shudder at the consequences of crime to others, while we tremble for them to ourselves. We talk of the dark and cowardly assassin; and this is well, when an individual shrinks from the face of an enemy, and purchases his own safety by striking a blow in the dark; but how the charge of cowardly can be applied to the public assassin, who, in the very act of destroying another, lays down his life as the pledge and forfeit of his sincerity and boldness, I am at a loss to devise. There may be barbarous prejudice, rooted hatred, unprincipled treachery in such an act; but he who resolves to take all the danger and odium upon himself can no more be branded with cowardice than Regulus devoting himself for his country, or Codrus leaping into the fiery gulf. A wily Father Inquisitor, coolly and with plenary authority condemning hundreds of helpless, unoffending victims to the flames, or the horrors of a living tomb, while he himself would not suffer a hair of his head to be hurt, is, to me, a character without any qualifying trait in it. Again: the Spanish conqueror and hero, the favourite of his monarch, who enticed thirty thousand poor Mexicans into a large open building under promise of strict faith and cordial good-will, and then set fire to it, making sport of the cries and agonies of these deluded creatures, is an instance of uniting the most hardened cruelty with the most heartless selfishness. His plea was, keeping no faith with heretics; this was Guy Faux's too: but I am sure at least that

the latter kept faith with himself; he was in earnest in his professions. *His* was not gay, wanton, unfeeling depravity; he did not murder in sport: it was serious work that he had taken in hand. To see this arch-bigot, this heart-whole traitor, this pale miner in the infernal regions, skulking in his retreat with his cloak and dark lantern, moving cautiously about among his barrels of gunpowder loaded with death, but not yet ripe for destruction, regardless of the lives of others, and more than indifferent to his own, presents a picture of the strange infatuation of the human understanding, but not of the depravity of the human will, without an equal. There were thousands of pious Papists privy to and ready to applaud the deed when done; there was no one but our old fifth-of-November friend, who still flutters in rags and straw on the occasion, that had the courage to attempt it. In him stern duty and unshaken faith prevailed over natural frailty."

It is impossible, upon Catholic principles, not to admit the force of this reasoning: we can only not help smiling (with the writer) at the simplicity of the gulled editor, swallowing the dregs of Loyola for the very quintessence of sublimated reason in England at the commencement of the nineteenth century. We will just, as a contrast, show what we Protestants (who are a party concerned) thought upon the same subject at a period rather nearer to the heroic project in question.

The Gunpowder Treason was the subject which

called forth the earliest specimen which is left us of the pulpit eloquence of Jeremy Taylor. When he preached the sermon on that anniversary, which is printed at the end of the folio edition of his Sermons, he was a young man, just commencing his ministry under the auspices of Archbishop Laud. From the learning and maturest oratory which it manifests, one should rather have conjectured it to have proceeded from the same person after he was ripened by time into a Bishop and Father of the Church. "And, really, these *Romano-barbari* could never pretend to any precedent for an act so barbarous as theirs. Adramelech, indeed, killed a king; but he spared the people. Haman would have killed the people, but spared the king; but that both king and people, princes and judges, branch and rush and root, should die at once (as if Caligula's wish were actuated, and all England upon one head), was never known till now, that all the malice of the world met in this as in a centre. The Sicilian evensong, the matins of St. Bartholomew, known for the pitiless and damned massacres, were but κάπνου σκίας ὄναρ, the dream of the shadow of smoke, if compared with this great fire. *In tam occupato sæculo fabulas vulgares nequitia non invenit.* This was a busy age. Herostratus must have invented a more sublimed malice than the burning of one temple, or not have been so much as spoke of since the discovery of the powder treason. But I must make more haste; I shall not else climb the sublimity

of this impiety. Nero was sometimes the *populare odium*, was popularly hated, and deserved it too: for he slew his master, and his wife, and all his family, once or twice over; opened his mother's womb; fired the city, laughed at it, slandered the Christians for it: but yet all these were but *principia malorum*, the very first rudiments of evil. Add, then, to these, Herod's masterpiece at Ramah, as it was deciphered by the tears and sad threnes of the matrons in a universal mourning for the loss of their pretty infants; yet this of Herod will prove but an infant wickedness, and that of Nero the evil but of one city. I would willingly have found out an example, but see I cannot. Should I put into the scale the extract of the old tyrants famous in antique stories:—

> Bistonii stabulum regis, Busiridis aras,
> Antiphatæ mensas, et Taurica regna Thoantis;—

should I take for true story the highest cruelty as it was fancied by the most hieroglyphical Egyptian, —this alone would weigh them down, as if the Alps were put in scale against the dust of a balance. For, had this accursed treason prospered, we should have had the whole kingdom mourn for the inestimable loss of its chiefest glory, its life, its present joy, and all its very hopes for the future. For such was their destined malice, that they would not only have inflicted so cruel a blow, but have made it incurable, by cutting off our supplies of joy, the whole succession of the Line Royal. Not only the vine itself,

but all the *gemmulæ*, and the tender olive branches, should either have been bent to their intentions, and made to grow crooked, or else been broken.

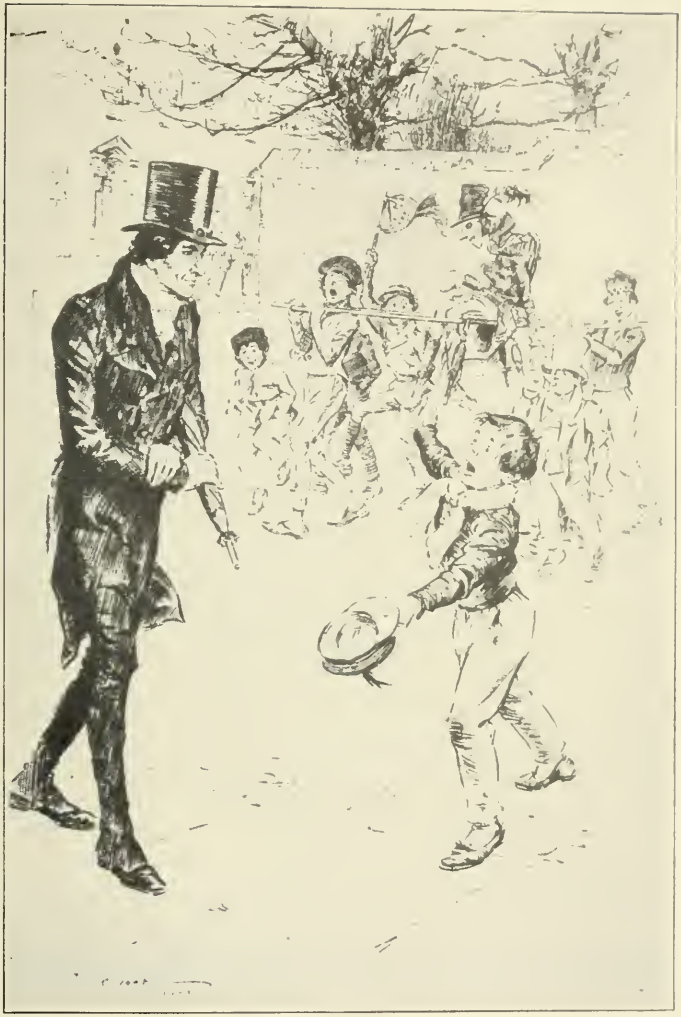
"And now, after such a sublimity of malice, I will not instance in the sacrilegious ruin of the neighbouring temples, which needs must have perished in the flame; nor in the disturbing the ashes of our entombed kings, devouring their dead ruins like sepulchral dogs: these are but minutes in respect of the ruin prepared for the living temples:—

> Stragem sed istam non tulit
> Christus cadentum Principum
> Impune, ne forsan sui
> Patris periret fabrica.
> Ergo quæ poterit lingua retexere
> Laudes, Christe, tuas, qui domitum struis
> Infidum populum cum Duce perfido!"

In such strains of eloquent indignation did Jeremy Taylor's young oratory inveigh against that stupendous attempt which he truly says had no parallel in ancient or modern times. A century and a half of European crimes has elapsed since he made the assertion, and his position remains in its strength. He wrote near the time in which the nefarious project had like to have been completed. Men's minds still were shuddering from the recentness of the escape. It must have been within his memory, or have been sounded in his ears so young by his parents, that he would seem, in his maturer years, to have remembered it. No wonder, then, that he describes

it in words that burn. But to us, to whom the tradition has come slowly down, and has had time to cool, the story of Guido Vaux sounds rather like a tale, a fable, and an invention, than true history. It supposes such gigantic audacity of daring, combined with such more than infantile stupidity in the motive,—such a combination of the fiend and the monkey, that credulity is almost swallowed up in contemplating the singularity of the attempt. It has accordingly, in some degree, shared the fate of fiction. It is familiarised to us in a kind of serio-ludicrous way, like the story of *Guy of Warwick* or *Valentine and Orson.* The way which we take to perpetuate the memory of this deliverance is well adapted to keep up this fabular notion. Boys go about the streets annually with a beggarly scarecrow dressed up, which is to be burnt indeed, at night, with holy zeal; but, meantime, they beg a penny for *poor Guy:* this periodical petition, which we have heard from our infancy, combined with the dress and appearance of the effigy, so well calculated to move compassion, has the effect of quite removing from our fancy the horrid circumstances of the story which is thus commemorated; and in *poor Guy* vainly should we try to recognise any of the features of that tremendous madman in iniquity, Guido Vaux, with his horrid crew of accomplices, that sought to emulate earthquakes and bursting volcanoes in their more than mortal mischief.

Indeed, the whole ceremony of burning Guy



Faux, or *the Pope*, as he is indifferently called, is a sort of *Treason Travestie*, and admirably adapted to lower our feelings upon this memorable subject. The printers of the little duodecimo *Prayer Book*, printed by T. Baskett,[1] in 1749, which has the effigy of his sacred majesty George II. piously prefixed, have illustrated the service (a very fine one in itself) which is appointed for the anniversary of this day with a print which it is not very easy to describe; but the contents appear to be these: The scene is a room, I conjecture in the king's palace. Two persons—one of whom I take to be James himself, from his wearing his hat, while the other stands bareheaded—are intently surveying a sort of speculum, or magic mirror, which stands upon a pedestal in the midst of the room, in which a little figure of Guy Faux with his dark lantern, approaching the door of the Parliament House, is made discernible by the light proceeding from a *great eye* which shines in from the topmost corner of the apartment; by which eye the pious artist no doubt meant to designate Providence. On the other side of the mirror is a figure doing something, which puzzled me when a child, and continues to puzzle me now. The best I can make of it is, that it is a

[1] The same, I presume, upon whom the clergyman in the song of the "Vicar and Moses," not without judgment, passes this memorable censure:—

"Here, Moses the king:
'T is a scandalous thing
That this Baskett should print for the Crown."

conspirator busy laying the train; but then, why is he represented in the king's chamber? Conjecture upon so fantastical a design is vain; and I only notice the print as being one of the earliest graphic representations which woke my childhood into wonder, and doubtless combined, with the mummery before mentioned, to take off the edge of that horror which the naked historical mention of Guido's conspiracy could not have failed of exciting.

Now that so many years are past since that abominable machination was happily frustrated, it will not, I hope, be considered a profane sporting with the subject if we take no very serious survey of the consequences that would have flowed from this plot if it had had a successful issue. The first thing that strikes us, in a selfish point of view, is the material change which it must have produced in the course of the nobility. All the ancient peerage being extinguished, as it was intended, at one blow, the *Red Book* must have been closed for ever, or a new race of peers must have been created to supply the deficiency. As the first part of this dilemma is a deal too shocking to think of, what a fund of mouth-watering reflections does this give rise to in the breast of us plebeians of A. D. 1823! Why, you or I, reader, might have been Duke of ——, or Earl of ——. I particularise no titles, to avoid the least suspicion of intention to usurp the dignities of the two noblemen whom I have in my eye; but a feeling more dignified than envy sometimes excites a

sigh, when I think how the posterity of Guido's Legion of Honour (among whom you or I might have been) might have rolled down "dulcified," as Burke expresses it, "by an exposure to the influence of heaven in a long flow of generations, from the hard, acidulous, metallic tincture of the spring."[1] What new orders of merit, think you, this English Napoleon would have chosen? Knights of the Barrel, or Lords of the Tub, Grand Almoners of the Cellar, or Ministers of Explosion? We should have given the train *couchant*, and the fire *rampant*, in our arms; we should have quartered the dozen white matches in our coats: the Shallows would have been nothing to us.

Turning away from these mortifying reflections, let us contemplate its effects upon the *other house;* for they were all to have gone together,—king, lords, commons.

To assist our imagination, let us take leave to suppose (and we do it in the harmless wantonness of fancy) that the tremendous explosion had taken place in our days. We better know what a House of Commons is in our days, and can better estimate our loss. Let us imagine, then, to ourselves, the united members sitting in full conclave above; Faux just ready with his train and matches below,—in his hand a "reed tipt with fire." He applies the fatal engine——.

To assist our notions still further, let us suppose some lucky dog of a reporter, who had escaped by

[1] Letter to a Noble Lord.

miracle upon some plank of St. Stephen's benches, and came plump upon the roof of the adjacent Abbey, from whence descending, at some neighbouring coffee-house, first wiping his clothes and calling for a glass of lemonade, he sits down and reports what he had heard and seen (*quorum pars magna fuit*), for the *Morning Post* or the *Courier*. We can scarcely imagine him describing the event in any other words but some such as these:—

"A *Motion* was put and carried, that this House do *adjourn;* that the Speaker do *quit the chair*. The House ROSE amid clamours for Order."

In some such way the event might most technically have been conveyed to the public. But a poetical mind, not content with this dry method of narration, cannot help pursuing the effects of this tremendous blowing up, this adjournment in the air, *sine die*. It sees the benches mount,—the Chair first, and then the benches; and first the Treasury Bench, hurried up in this nitrous explosion,—the Members, as it were, pairing off; Whigs and Tories taking their friendly apotheosis together (as they did their sandwiches below in Bellamy's room). Fancy, in her flight, keeps pace with the aspiring legislators: she sees the awful seat of order mounting, till it becomes finally fixed, a constellation, next to Cassiopeia's chair,—the wig of him that sat in it taking its place near Berenice's curls. St. Peter, at heaven's wicket,—no, not St. Peter,—St. Stephen, with open arms, receives his own——.

While Fancy beholds these Celestial appropriations, Reason, no less pleased, discerns the mighty benefit which so complete a renovation must produce below. Let the most determined foe to corruption, the most thorough-paced redresser of abuses, try to conceive a more absolute purification of the House than this was calculated to produce. Why, Pride's Purge was nothing to it. The whole borough-mongering system would have been got rid of, fairly *exploded;* with it the senseless distinctions of party must have disappeared, faction must have vanished, corruption have expired in the air. From Hundred, Tything, and Wapentake, some new Alfred would have convened, in all its purity, the primitive Witenagemote,—fixed upon a basis of property or population permanent as the poles——.

From this dream of universal restitution, Reason and Fancy with difficulty awake to view the real state of things. But, blessed be Heaven! St. Stephen's walls are standing, all her seats firmly secured; nay, some have doubted (since the Septennial Act) whether gunpowder itself, or anything short of a *committee above stairs*, would be able to shake any one member from his seat;—that great and final improvement to the Abbey, which is all that seems wanting,—the removing Westminster Hall and its appendages, and letting in the view of the Thames, —must not be expected in our days. Dismissing, therefore, all such speculations as mere tales of a tub, it is the duty of every honest Englishman to

endeavour, by means less wholesale than Guido's, to ameliorate, without extinguishing parliaments; to hold the *lantern* to the dark places of corruption; to apply the *match* to the rotten parts of the system only; and to wrap himself up, not in the muffling mantle of conspiracy, but in the warm honest *cloak* of integrity and patriotic intention.

ON THE AMBIGUITIES ARISING FROM PROPER NAMES

HOW oddly it happens that the same sound shall suggest to the minds of two persons hearing it, ideas the most opposite! I was conversing, a few years since, with a young friend upon the subject of poetry, and particularly that species of it which is known by the name of the Epithalamium. I ventured to assert that the most perfect specimen of it in our language was the Epithalamium of Spenser upon his own marriage.

My young gentleman, who has a smattering of taste, and would not willingly be thought ignorant of anything remotely connected with the *belles-lettres*, expressed a degree of surprise, mixed with mortification, that he should never have heard of this poem; Spenser being an author with whose writings he thought himself peculiarly conversant.

I offered to show him the poem in the fine folio copy of the poet's works which I have at home. He seemed pleased with the offer, though the mention of the folio seemed again to puzzle him. But, presently after, assuming a grave look, he compassionately muttered to himself, "Poor Spencer!"

There was something in the tone with which he spoke these words that struck me not a little. It was more like the accent with which a man bemoans some recent calamity that has happened to a friend

than that tone of sober grief with which we lament the sorrows of a person, however excellent and however grievous his afflictions may have been, who has been dead more than two centuries. I had the curiosity to inquire into the reasons of so uncommon an ejaculation. My young gentleman, with a more solemn tone of pathos than before, repeated, "Poor Spencer!" and added, "He has lost his wife!"

My astonishment at this assertion rose to such a height, that I began to think the brain of my young friend must be cracked, or some unaccountable reverie had gotten possession of it. But, upon further explanation, it appeared that the word "Spenser"—which to you or me, reader, in a conversation upon poetry too, would naturally have called up the idea of an old poet in a ruff, one Edmund Spenser, that flourished in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and wrote a poem called "The Faëry Queene," with "The Shepherd's Calendar," and many more verses besides —did, in the mind of my young friend, excite a very different and quite modern idea; namely, that of the Honourable William Spencer, one of the living ornaments, if I am not misinformed, of this present poetical era, A.D. 1811.

ON THE CUSTOM OF HISSING AT THE THEATRES

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF A CLUB OF DAMNED AUTHORS

MR. REFLECTOR—I am one of those persons whom the world has thought proper to designate by the title of Damned Authors. In that memorable season of dramatic failures, 1806–7,—in which no fewer, I think, than two tragedies, four comedies, one opera, and three farces suffered at Drury Lane Theatre,—I was found guilty of constructing an afterpiece, and was *damned.*

Against the decision of the public in such instances there can be no appeal. The Clerk of Chatham might as well have protested against the decision of Cade and his followers who were then *the public.* Like him, I was condemned because I could write.

Not but it did appear to some of us that the measures of the popular tribunal at that period savoured a little of harshness and of the *summum jus.* The public mouth was early in the season fleshed upon the "Vindictive Man," and some pieces of that nature; and it retained, through the remainder of it, a relish of blood. As Dr. Johnson would have said, "Sir, there was a habit of sibilation in the house."

Still less am I disposed to inquire into the reason of the comparative lenity, on the other hand, with which some pieces were treated, which, to indifferent judges, seemed at least as much deserving of condemnation as some of those which met with it. I am willing to put a favourable construction upon the votes that were given against us; I believe that there was no bribery or designed partiality in the case: only "our nonsense did not happen to suit their nonsense"; that was all.

But against the *manner* in which the public, on these occasions, think fit to deliver their disapprobation, I must and ever will protest.

Sir, imagine—but you have been present at the damning of a piece—those who never had that felicity, I beg them to imagine—a vast theatre, like that which Drury Lane was before it was a heap of dust and ashes (I insult not over its fallen greatness; let it recover itself when it can for me, let it lift up its towering head once more, and take in poor authors to write for it; *hic cæstus artemque repono*),—a theatre like that, filled with all sorts of disgusting sounds,—shrieks, groans, hisses, but chiefly the last, like the noise of many waters, or that which Don Quixote heard from the fulling-mills, or that wilder combination of devilish sounds which St. Anthony listened to in the wilderness.

Oh! Mr. Reflector, is it not a pity that the sweet human voice, which was given man to speak with, to sing with, to whisper tones of love in, to express

compliance, to convey a favour, or to grant a suit,—that voice, which in a Siddons or a Braham rouses us, in a Siren Catalani charms and captivates us,—that the musical, expressive human voice should be converted into a rival of the noises of silly geese, and irrational, venomous snakes?

I never shall forget the sounds on *my night*. I never before that time fully felt the reception which the Author of all Ill, in the "Paradise Lost," meets with from the critics in the *pit*, at the final close of his Tragedy upon the Human Race,—though that, alas! met with too much success:—

> From innumerable tongues
> A dismal universal *hiss*, the sound
> Of public scorn. Dreadful was the din
> Of *hissing* through the hall, thick swarming now
> With complicated monsters, head and tail,
> Scorpion and asp, and Amphisbæna dire,
> Cerastes horn'd, Hydrus, and Elops drear,
> And Dipsas.

For *hall* substitute *theatre*, and you have the very image of what takes place at what is called the *damnation* of a piece,—and properly so called; for here you see its origin plainly, whence the custom was derived, and what the first piece was that so suffered. After this, none can doubt the propriety of the appellation.

But, sir, as to the justice of bestowing such appalling, heart-withering denunciations of the popular obloquy upon the venial mistake of a poor author,

who thought to please us in the act of filling his pockets,—for the sum of his demerits amounts to no more than that,—it does, I own, seem to me a species of retributive justice far too severe for the offence. A culprit in the pillory (bate the eggs) meets with no severer exprobration.

Indeed, I have often wondered that some modest critic has not proposed that there should be a wooden machine to that effect erected in some convenient part of the proscenium, which an unsuccessful author should be required to mount, and stand his hour, exposed to the apples and oranges of the pit. This *amende honorable* would well suit with the meanness of some authors, who, in their prologues fairly prostrate their skulls to the audience, and seem to invite a pelting.

Or why should they not have their pens publicly broke over their heads, as the swords of recreant knights in old times were, and an oath administered to them that they should never write again?

Seriously, *Messieurs the Public*, this outrageous way which you have got of expressing your displeasures is too much for the occasion. When I was deafening under the effects of it, I could not help asking what crime of great moral turpitude I had committed: for every man about me seemed to feel the offence as personal to himself: as something which public interest and private feelings alike called upon him in the strongest possible manner, to stigmatise with infamy.

HISSING AT THE THEATRES

The Romans, it is well known to you, Mr. Reflector, took a gentler method of marking their disapprobation of an author's work. They were a humane and equitable nation. They left the *furca* and the *patibulum*, the axe and the rods, to great offenders: for these minor and (if I may so term them) extra-moral offences, *the bent thumb* was considered as a sufficient sign of disapprobation,—*vertere pollicem;* as *the pressed thumb, premere pollicem*, was a mark of approving.

And really there seems to have been a sort of fitness in this method, a correspondency of sign in the punishment to the offence. For, as the action of *writing* is performed by bending the thumb forward, the retroversion or bending back of that joint did not unaptly point to the *opposite of that action;* implying that it was the will of the audience that the author should *write no more:* a much more significant as well as more humane way of expressing that desire than our custom of hissing, which is altogether senseless and indefensible. Nor do we find that the Roman audiences deprived themselves, by this lenity, of any tittle of that supremacy which audiences in all ages have thought themselves bound to maintain over such as have been candidates for their applause. On the contrary, by this method they seem to have had the author, as we should express it, completely *under finger and thumb.*

The provocations to which a dramatic genius is exposed from the public are so much the more vexa-

tious as they are removed from any possibility of retaliation, which sweetens most other injuries; for the public *never writes itself.* Not but something very like it took place at the time of the O.P. differences. The placards which were nightly exhibited were, properly speaking, the composition of the public. The public wrote them, the public applauded them; and precious morceaux of wit and eloquence they were,—except some few of a better quality, which it is well known were furnished by professed dramatic writers. After this specimen of what the public can do for itself, it should be a little slow in condemning what others do for it.

As the degrees of malignancy vary in people according as they have more or less of the Old Serpent (the father of hisses) in their composition, I have sometimes amused myself with analysing this many-headed hydra, which calls itself the public, into the component parts of which it is "complicated, head and tail," and seeing how many varieties of the snake kind it can afford.

First, there is the Common English Snake.—This is that part of the auditory who are always the majority at damnations; but who, having no critical venom in themselves to sting them on, stay till they hear others hiss, and then join in for company.

The Blind Worm is a species very nearly allied to the foregoing. Some naturalists have doubted whether they are not the same.

The Rattlesnake.—These are your obstreperous

talking critics,—the impertinent guides of the pit,—who will not give a plain man leave to enjoy an evening's entertainment; but with their frothy jargon and incessant finding of faults, either drown his pleasure quite, or force him, in his own defence, to join in their clamorous censure. The hiss always originates with these. When this creature springs his *rattle*, you would think, from the noise it makes, there was something in it; but you have only to examine the instrument from which the noise proceeds, and you will find it typical of a critic's tongue,—a shallow membrane, empty, voluble, and seated in the most contemptible part of the creature's body.

The Whipsnake.—This is he that lashes the poor author the next day in the newspapers.

The Deaf Adder, or *Surda Echidna* of Linnæus.—Under this head may be classed all that portion of the spectators (for audience they properly are not), who, not finding the first act of a piece answer to their preconceived notions of what a first act should be, like Obstinate in John Bunyan, positively thrust their fingers in their ears, that they may not hear a word of what is coming, though perhaps the very next act may be composed in a style as different as possible, and be written quite to their own tastes. These adders refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, because the tuning of his instrument gave them offence.

I should weary you and myself too, if I were to go through all the classes of the serpent kind. Two

qualities are common to them all. They are creatures of remarkably cold digestions, and chiefly haunt *pits* and low grounds.

I proceed with more pleasure to give you an account of a club to which I have the honour to belong. There are fourteen of us, who are all authors that have been once in our lives what is called *damned.* We meet on the anniversary of our respective nights, and make ourselves merry at the expense of the public. The chief tenets which distinguish our society, and which every man among us is bound to hold for gospel, are—

That the public, or mob, in all ages have been a set of blind, deaf, obstinate, senseless, illiterate savages. That no man of genius, in his senses, would be ambitious of pleasing such a capricious, ungrateful rabble. That the only legitimate end of writing for them is to pick their pockets; and, that failing, we are at full liberty to vilify and abuse them as much as ever we think fit.

That authors, by their affected pretences to humility, which they made use of as a cloak to insinuate their writings into the callous senses of the multitude, obtuse to everything but the grossest flattery, have by degrees made that great beast their master; as we may act submission to children till we are obliged to practise it in earnest. That authors are and ought to be considered the masters and preceptors of the public, and not *vice versâ.* That it was

so in the days of Orpheus, Linus, and Musæus; and would be so again, if it were not that writers prove traitors to themselves. That, in particular, in the days of the first of those three great authors just mentioned, audiences appear to have been perfect models of what audiences should be; for though, along with the trees and the rocks and the wild creatures which he drew after him to listen to his strains, some serpents doubtless came to hear his music, it does not appear that any one among them ever lifted up *a dissentient voice*. They knew what was due to authors in those days. Now every stock and stone turns into a serpent, and has a voice.

That the terms "Courteous Reader" and "Candid Auditors," as having given rise to a false notion in those to whom they were applied, as if they conferred upon them some right, *which they cannot have*, of exercising their judgments, ought to be utterly banished and exploded.

These are our distinguishing tenets. To keep up the memory of the cause in which we suffered, as the ancients sacrificed a goat, a supposed unhealthy animal, to Æsculapius, on our feast-nights we cut up a goose, an animal typical of *the popular voice*, to the deities of Candour and Patient Hearing. A zealous member of the society once proposed that we should revive the obsolete luxury of viper-broth; but the stomachs of some of the company rising at the proposition, we lost the benefit of that highly salutary and *antidotal dish*.

The privilege of admission to our club is strictly limited to such as have been fairly *damned.* A piece that has met with ever so little applause, that has but languished its night or two, and then gone out, will never entitle its author to a seat among us. An exception to our usual readiness in conferring this privilege is in the case of a writer, who, having been once condemned, writes again, and becomes candidate for a second martyrdom. Simple damnation we hold to be a merit; but to be twice-damned we adjudge infamous. Such a one we utterly reject, and blackball without a hearing:—

The common damned shun his society.

Hoping that your publication of our Regulations may be a means of inviting some more members into our society, I conclude this long letter.

I am, Sir, yours,

SEMEL-DAMNATUS.

THE GOOD CLERK, A CHARACTER

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF "THE COMPLETE ENGLISH TRADESMAN"

THE Good Clerk.—He writeth a fair and swift hand, and is competently versed in the four first rules of arithmetic, in the Rule of Three (which is sometimes called the Golden Rule), and in Practice. We mention these things that we may leave no room for cavillers to say that anything essential hath been omitted in our definition; else, to speak the truth, these are but ordinary accomplishments, and such as every understrapper at a desk is commonly furnished with. The character we treat of soareth higher.

He is clean and neat in his person; not from a vainglorious desire of setting himself forth to advantage in the eyes of the other sex (with which vanity too many of our young sparks nowadays are infected), but to do credit, as we say, to the office. For this reason, he evermore taketh care that his desk or his books receive no soil; the which things he is commonly as solicitous to have fair and unblemished, as the owner of a fine horse is to have him appear in good keep.

He riseth early in the morning; not because early rising conduceth to health (though he doth not altogether despise that consideration), but chiefly to the intent that he may be first at the desk. There

is his post,—there he delighteth to be, unless when his meals or necessity calleth him away; which time he alway esteemeth as loss, and maketh as short as possible.

He is temperate in eating and drinking, that he may preserve a clear head and steady hand for his master's service. He is also partly induced to this observation to the rules of temperance by his respect for religion and the laws of his country; which things, it may once for all be noted, do add special assistances to his actions, but do not and cannot furnish the mainspring or motive thereto. His first ambition, as appeareth all along, is to be a good Clerk; his next, a good Christian, a good Patriot, etc.

Correspondent to this, he keepeth himself honest, not for fear of the laws, but because he hath observed how unseemly an article it maketh in the Day-Book or Ledger when a sum is set down lost or missing; it being his pride to make these books to agree and to tally, the one side with the other, with a sort of architectural symmetry and correspondence.

He marrieth, or marrieth not, as best suiteth with his employer's views. Some merchants do the rather desire to have married men in their Counting-houses, because they think the married state a pledge for their servants' integrity, and an incitement to them to be industrious; and it was an observation of a late Lord Mayor of London, that the sons of clerks do generally prove clerks themselves, and that merchants

encouraging persons in their employ to marry, and to have families, was the best method of securing a breed of sober, industrious young men attached to the mercantile interest. Be this as it may, such a character as we have been describing will wait till the pleasure of his employer is known on this point; and regulateth his desires by the custom of the house or firm to which he belongeth.

He avoideth profane oaths and jesting, as so much time lost from his employ; what spare time he hath for conversation, which, in a counting-house such as we have been supposing, can be but small, he spendeth in putting seasonable questions to such of his fellows (and sometimes *respectfully* to the master himself) who can give him information respecting the price and quality of goods, the state of exchange, or the latest improvements in book-keeping; thus making the motion of his lips, as well as of his fingers, subservient to his master's interest. Not that he refuseth a brisk saying, or a cheerful sally of wit, when it comes unforced, is free of offence, and hath a convenient brevity. For this reason, he hath commonly some such phrase as this in his mouth:—

> It 's a slovenly look
> To blot your book.

Or,

> Red ink for ornament, black for use:
> The best of things are open to abuse.

So upon the eve of any great holy-day, of which

he keepeth one or two at least every year, he will merrily say, in the hearing of a confidential friend, but to none other,—

All work and no play
Makes Jack a dull boy.

Or,

A bow always bent must crack at last.

But then this must always be understood to be spoken confidentially, and, as we say, *under the rose.*

Lastly, his dress is plain, without singularity; with no other ornament than the quill, which is the badge of his function, stuck behind the dexter ear, and this rather for convenience of having it at hand, when he hath been called away from his desk, and expecteth to resume his seat there again shortly, than from any delight which he taketh in foppery or ostentation. The colour of his clothes is generally noted to be black rather than brown, brown rather than blue or green. His whole deportment is staid, modest, and civil. His motto is Regularity——.

This Character was sketched in an interval of business, to divert some of the melancholy hours of a Counting-house. It is so little a creature of fancy, that it is scarce anything more than a recollection of some of those frugal and economical maxims which, about the beginning of the last century (England's meanest period), were endeavoured to be inculcated and instilled into the breasts of the London Ap-

prentices[1] by a class of instructors who might not inaptly be termed *The Masters of Mean Morals.* The astonishing narrowness and illiberality of the lessons contained in some of those books is inconceivable by those whose studies have not led them that way, and would almost induce one to subscribe to the hard censure which Drayton has passed upon the mercantile spirit:—

> The gripple merchant, born to be the curse
> Of this brave isle.

I have now lying before me that curious book by Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman.* The pompous detail, the studied analysis of every little mean art, every sneaking address, every trick and subterfuge short of larceny that is necessary to the tradesman's occupation, with the hundreds of anecdotes, dialogues (in Defoe's liveliest manner) interspersed, all tending to the same amiable purpose,—namely, the sacrificing of every honest emotion of the soul to what he calls the main chance, —if you read it in an *ironical sense*, and as a piece of *covered satire*, make it one of the most amusing books which Defoe ever writ, as much so as any of his best novels. It is difficult to say what his intention was in writing it. It is almost impossible to suppose him in earnest. Yet such is the bent of the

[1] This term designated a larger class of young men than that to which it is now confined. It took in the articled clerks of merchants and bankers, the George Barnwells of the day.

book to narrow and to degrade the heart, that if such maxims were as catching and infectious as those of a licentious cast, which happily is not the case, had I been living at that time, I certainly should have recommended to the Grand Jury of Middlesex, who presented *The Fable of the Bees*, to have presented this book of Defoe's in preference, as of a far more vile and debasing tendency. I will give one specimen of his advice to the young tradesman on the *Government of his Temper:* "The retail tradesman in especial, and even every tradesman in his station, must furnish himself with a competent stock of patience. I mean that sort of patience which is needful to bear with all sorts of impertinence, and the most provoking curiosity that it is possible to imagine the buyers, even the worst of them, are, or can be, guilty of. *A tradesman behind his counter must have no flesh and blood about him, no passions, no resentment;* he must never be angry, —no, not so much as seem to be so, if a customer tumbles him five hundred pounds' worth of goods, and scarce bids money for anything; nay, though they really come to his shop with no intent to buy, as many do, only to see what is to be sold, and though he knows they cannot be better pleased than they are at some other shop where they intend to buy, 't is all one; the tradesman must take it; he must place it to the account of his calling, that *'t is his business to be ill used and resent nothing;* and so must answer as obligingly to those that give him an

hour or two's trouble and buy nothing, as he does to those who, in half the time, lay out ten or twenty pounds. The case is plain; and if some do give him trouble, and do not buy, others make amends, and do buy; and as for the trouble, 't is the business of the shop."

Here follows a most admirable story of a mercer who, by his indefatigable meanness and more than Socratic patience under affronts, overcame and reconciled a lady, who, upon the report of another lady that he had behaved saucily to some third lady, had determined to shun his shop, but, by the over-persuasions of a fourth lady, was induced to go to it; which she does, declaring beforehand that she will buy nothing, but give him all the trouble she can. Her attack and his defence, her insolence and his persevering patience, are described in colours worthy of a Mandeville; but it is too long to recite. "The short inference from this long discourse," says he, "is this,—that here you see, and I could give you many examples like this, how and in what manner a shopkeeper is to behave himself in the way of his business; what impertinences, what taunts, flouts, and ridiculous things he must bear in his trade, and must not show the least return, or the least signal of disgust: he must have no passions, no fire in his temper; he must be all soft and smooth; nay, if his real temper be naturally fiery and hot, he must show none of it in his shop; he must be a perfect *complete hypocrite*, if he will be a *complete*

tradesman.[1]" It is true, natural tempers are not to be always counterfeited: the man cannot easily be a lamb in his shop and a lion in himself; but, let it be easy or hard, it must be done, and is done. There are men who have by custom and usage brought themselves to it, that nothing could be meeker and milder than they when behind the counter, and yet nothing be more furious and raging in every other part of life: nay, the provocations they have met with in their shops have so irritated their rage, that they would go upstairs from their shop, and fall into frenzies, and a kind of madness, and beat their heads against the wall, and perhaps mischief themselves, if not prevented, till the violence of it had gotten vent, and the passions abate and cool. I heard once of a shopkeeper that behaved himself thus to such an extreme, that when he was provoked by the impertinence of the customers beyond what his temper could bear, he would go upstairs and beat his wife, kick his children about like dogs, and be as furious for two or three minutes as a man chained down in Bedlam; and again, when that heat was over, would sit down and cry faster than the children he had abused; and, after the fit, he would go down into the shop again, and be as humble, courteous, and as calm as any man whatever; so absolute a government of his passions had he in the shop, and so little out of it: in the shop, a soulless animal

[1] As no qualification accompanies this maxim, it must be understood as the genuine sentiment of the author!

that would resent nothing; and in the family, a madman: in the shop, meek like a lamb; but in the family outrageous, like a Libyan lion. The sum of the matter is, it is necessary for a tradesman to subject himself, by all the ways possible, to his business; *his customers are to be his idols; so far as he may worship idols, by allowance, he is to bow down to them, and worship them;* at least he is not in any way to displease them, or show any disgust or distaste whatsoever they may say or do. The bottom of all is that he is intending to get money by them; and it is not for him that gets money to offer the least inconvenience to them by whom he gets it: he is to consider that, as Solomon says, "the borrower is servant to the lender; so the seller is servant to the buyer." What he says on the head of "Pleasures and Recreations" is not less amusing: "The tradesman's pleasure should be in his business: his companions should be in his books" (he means his Ledger, Waste-book, etc.), "and if he has a family he makes his excursions upstairs and no further. None of my cautions aim at restraining a tradesman from diverting himself, as we call it, with his fireside, or keeping company with his wife and children." Liberal allowance! nay, almost licentious and criminal indulgence! But it is time to dismiss this *Philosopher of Meanness.* More of this stuff would illiberalise the pages of the *Reflector.* Was the man in earnest, when he could bring such powers of description, and all the charms of natural eloquence, in

commendation of the meanest, vilest, wretchedest degradations of the human character? or did he not rather laugh in his sleeve at the doctrines which he inculcated; and, retorting upon the grave citizens of London their own arts, palm upon them a sample of disguised satire under the name of wholesome Instruction?

NOTES

NOTES

THE ADVENTURES OF ULYSSES
(1808)

ANOTHER contribution to Godwin's Juvenile Library. Lamb writes to Manning in February 1808:—"I have done two books since the failure of my farce; they will both be out this summer. The one is a juvenile book—'The adventures of Ulysses,' intended to be an introduction to the reading of Telemachus! It is done out of the Odyssey, not from the Greek—I would not mislead you—nor yet from Pope's Odyssey, but from an older translation of one Chapman. The 'Shakspeare Tales' suggested the doing it." Again, in 1827, writing to Barton, he asks:—"Did you ever read my 'Adventures of Ulysses,' founded on Chapman's old translation of it, for children or men? Chapman is divine, and my abridgment has not quite emptied him of his divinity." Traces of Chapman may be discovered in abundance in Lamb's version, extending to a repetition of misprints in Chapman which even down to the present day have not been corrected. The Homeric river-epithet "Fair-flowing" was personified by Chapman into a

river goddess. We may suppose that he wrote "Calliroe," and that by a printer's error it became "Callicoe," in which shape it strangely appears in Lamb's copy. But Lamb's Greek was not his strong point. For the rest, he frequently borrows whole lines of Chapman's version, as in the story of Æolus—

> "Only he left abroad the western wind";

in that of Polyphemus—

> "Which that abhorred No-man did put out,
> Assisted by his execrable rout,"

and so forth, giving to his narrative a rhythm and diction pleasantly old-fashioned. There seems no reason why the version should not again become a favourite schoolroom story-book, and form as pleasant an introduction to the Odyssey as the Tales from Shakspeare have been, and still are, to the study of our English poet.

GUY FAUX

("London Magazine," November 1823)

THE latter portion of this paper first appeared in Leigh Hunt's *Reflector* in 1811, under the following title, "On the probable effects of the Gunpowder Treason in this country, if the Conspirators had accomplished their object." It began with the paragraph on p. 254, "The Gunpowder Treason was the subject," etc. etc. Lamb revived it with additions twelve years later in the *London Magazine*, *à propos* of an article of Hazlitt's (the "ingenious and subtle writer" alluded to) in the *Examiner* of November 1821.

NOTES

ON THE CUSTOM OF HISSING AT THE THEATRES

(The "Reflector," No. iii. Art. xi. 1811)

A REMINISCENCE of the failure of *Mr. H*—— at Drury Lane in 1806. *The Vindictive Man* was a play of Holcroft's produced in November 1806, only three weeks before Lamb's equally unsuccessful venture. The condemnation of Holcroft's play is fully and amusingly described by Lamb in a letter to Manning of December 5, 1806. Mr. De Camp, who played Goldfinch, a character revived from Holcroft's *Road to Ruin*, "was hooted, more than hissed; hooted and bellowed off the stage before the second act was finished, so that the remainder of his part was forced to be, with some violence to the play, omitted." The play, according to Lamb, "died in part of its own weakness, and in part for being choked up with bad actors." It was acted only twice.

THE GOOD CLERK

(The "Reflector," No. iv. Art. xxiii. 1811)

THE END

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